30th International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa

SEMINARS

RELIGIOUS CHANGE AND CULTURAL DOMINATION

David N. Lorenzen, *Editor*

915.9
In611
1976re

El Colegio de México

XXXI INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF HUMAN SCIENCES
IN ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA

Religious Change and Cultural Domination

Editor
David N. Lorenzen

El Colegio de México

Editorial : El Colegio de México
Año de edición : 1981
Lugar de edición : México
ISBN : 9681201086
Licencia: : Creative Commons

List of Participants

J.S. Grewal, Guru Nanak University, India.

A. H. Johns, Australian National University, Australia.

Nehemia Levtzion, University of Jerusalem, Israel.

David N. Lorenzen, El Colegio de México, Mexico.

William Madsen, Australian National University, Australia.

W. H. McLeod, University of Philippines, Philippines.

Rosario Mendoza Cortés, University of Philippines, Philippines.

S.A.A. Rizvi, Australian National University, Australia.

Eva Alexandra Uchmany, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico.

Contents

Preface 1

Introduction
David N. Lorenzen 3

Conversion under Muslim domination: a comparative study
Nehemia Levtzion 19

Islamization in the Indian subcontinent
S.A.A. Rizvi 39

Modes of Islamization in Southeast Asia
A. H. Johns 61

Religious changes in the conquest of Mexico
Eva Alexandra Uchmany 79

The Philippine experience under Spain: Christianization as social change
Rosario Mendoza Cortés 111

Religious syncretism
William Madsen 121

The Kabīr panth: heretics to hindus
David N. Lorenzen 151

Kabīr, Nānak, and the early Sikh panth
W. H. McLeod 173

The Sikh panth: 1500-1850
J. S. Grewal 193

Preface

The present volume derives from a seminar on "Religious Change and Domination" organized as part of the 30th International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa (formerly the World Orientalist Congress), held in Mexico City, in 1976. The problems involved in putting together a seminar with participants from just about every continent at times seemed insurmountable, not to mention the subsequent difficulties in assembling the revised articles and getting them ready for publication.

Among the papers originally presented in the seminar there have been only two casualties. The first was a paper on "Islamization as a Natural Process" by Hassan Hanafi of the University of Cairo, whose unfortunate omission is perhaps the result of a breakdown in the postal service between Egypt and Mexico. The second missing paper was by James O'Connell of the University of Toronto, on some aspects of "The Muslim Impact on Medieval Bengal". It was mutually agreed that this was too technical for a comparative collection of essays such as the present one and it is being published in a more appropriate forum.

To fill out the collection, Dr. S.A.A. Rizvi of the Australian National University has kindly contributed a valuable article on conversion to Islam in India. Although Dr. Rizvi did take part in the seminar as a discussant, the paper was not presented there. Permission has also been obtained to include William Madsen's formative article on religious syncretism in Mexico, which originally appeared in the *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, vol. 6 (Austin: University of Texas Press., 1967). The introduction is another addition.

The essays based on papers originally presented in the seminar include those of Nehemia Levtzion of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and of Anthony Johns of the Australian National University, each on different aspects of the problem of regional variations in the motives and processes of Islamization. Rosario Mendoza Cortes of the University of the Philippines and Eva Uchmany of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México have contributed essays on the questions of conversion and syncretism in the Christian spiritual conquest of these countries, the former from a rather more,

the latter from a rather less Christian point of view. The relative degrees of Hindu and Muslim influence in the Indian sects known as the Sikh *dharma* and the Kabir *panth* are examined in essays by J.S. Grewal of Guru Nanak University, Amritsar, by W.H. McLeod of the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand, and by myself, currently at El Colegio de México.

Financial support for organizing the original seminar and helping bring the participants to Mexico was provided by the International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, headed by its 1976 session president, Graciela de la Lama. The Congress itself was financed by the Government of Mexico together with El Colegio de México, and a variety of international foundations. The universities of the participants and they themselves, as individuals, also helped pay for their travel and research expenses. The work of editing and of preparing my own contributions was subsidized by El Colegio de México and by a grant from the Social Science Research Council of New York. The costs of translation and publication are being borne by the Congress in conjunction with El Colegio de México. None of these institutions, of course, are to be held responsible for the opinions expressed, which are those of the authors alone.

For their contributions of words and ideas, I would like to personally thank all those who participated in the Congress seminar and my colleagues and friends here in Mexico. The translation of Eva Uchmany's article from Spanish was done by Glenn Gardner, who also helped prepare all the articles for the press. Particular thanks are due to Professor de la Lama for putting together the Congress in the first place and since then, for her patience and for the management of all the involved financial and business negotiations connected with not only this, but also all the other publications stemming from the Congress.

David Lorenzen
Mexico City

Introduction

David N. Lorenzen

All major theories of societal organization and societal change currently competing in the academic marketplace —both those described as Marxist and as bourgeois— may broadly be characterized as structural-functionalist.[1] Most of these theories tend to assume that basic societal changes occur chiefly as a result of endogenous rather than exogenous factors or causes. In other words, they argue that change is somehow parthenogenetically conceived within the womb of the society that changes and is never, or only rarely, imposed upon that society from the outside. In one sense, this can be simply a tautologuous affirmation. If we assume a large enough universe of discourse all change is necessarily endogenous. This, for instance, is the basic strategy of the historian Immanuel Wallerstein when he subsumes most of the planet under "the modern world-system."[2] If, however, we take individual societies as our basic unit of analysis, and examine the changes taking place in them over limited periods of time, all change is not due to endogenous factors. Some change is endogenous, but much societal change stems from historical contacts —both peaceful and bellicose— between different societies which are usually coterminous with individual nation-states or clearly defined geographic-cultural regions.

The recognition of this fact does not necessarily entail the rejection of existing theories. It does imply that their ability to analyze and explain societal change in specific historical contexts is rather more limited than their proponents are inclined to admit. On the other hand, the vulgar historical positivism incarnated in Leopold von Ranke's stated intention to establish historical events "wie es eigentlich gewesen ist" does not embody sufficient explanatory power to carry analysis much beyond the level of simple historical narrative.

[1] See E. J. Hobsbawm, "Karl Marx's Contribution to Historiography," in *Ideology in Social Science* ed. Robin Blackburn, (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 265-83.

[2] I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

What we need is a model of societal change which gives greater weight to the role of contingent historical contact between different societies. This model should attempt to analyze the various elements involved in such contact and to explain how the effects of such contact radiate through and change the societies concerned. This is the principal theoretical aim of the essays in this volume. Although these essays are each concerned with specific historical cases of cultural contact which lead to religious change, collectively they do suggest a comparative set of general determinants of such change which can help explain why religious change is relatively rapid and complete in some instance (conversion) and slow and partial in others (syncretism and reaction).

Marxist and bourgeois theories of societal change are, of course, far from compatible even though both employ a structural-functional methodology. Significant differences likewise exist among different theorists of both traditions. At the risk of offending everyone and satisfying no one, I would like to offer some synthetic observations which hopefully can be applied —with the necessary changes— to both types of theory.

Classical Marxist theory divides society into base and superstructure. The base comprises the material forces and relations of production while the superstructure contains legal and political institutions and forms of social consciousness. Societal change in this analysis is chiefly the product of an inevitable conflict engendered between the ever changing material forces of production and the "existing relations of production" which eventually leads to a "period of social revolution". In his famous preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) Marx gives the following often quoted resumé of this process:

> With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic —in short, ideological— forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.[3]

[3] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, ed. L.S. Feuer (Garden City, N.Y. Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 43-44.

The structural divisions made by modern bourgeois structural-functional social theory are rather more difficult to outline, since the societal models proposed by different analysts vary more widely than Marxist models do. In part this stems from the fact that bourgeois theory lacks a high priest of the undisputed preeminence of Marx. If I may be allowed to oversimplify and ignore serious differences, a basic lowest common denominator of such models is a division of society into a plurality of institutions and sets of institutions that are partly autonomous and partly interdependent or reciprocal. On a simple economic level, for instance, the management of a factory takes the labor of its employees and returns to them wages, yet management and labor retain their independent identities. Changes in one institution may or may not lead to changes in other institutions depending on how such changes affect their mutual transactions. No institution or set of institutions has a decided primacy, logical or historical, over any other.[4]

Such a model differs from the Marxist one, as Hobsbawm points out, in two vital respects. First, the Marxists analyze societies in terms of a hierarchy of "levels" or "social phenomena" in which the economic aspect of society, the base or basis, is in some sense primary and determinant (in precisely what sense is a matter of heated debate).[5] Progressive development of the forces and relations of production give man an ever greater mastery of nature, and this creates a situation in which "history has a *direction.*" Second, the Marxist model posits "the existence of internal contradictions" within socio-economic systems and asserts that these contradictions are "the mechanism for change which becomes development."[6]

If Marxist theory argues that both internal conflict and directional change are necessary attributes of any society, bourgeois structural-functional theory has tended to emphasize the presence of order, stability and internal equilibrium. In both its sociological and anthropological versions bourgeois theory fails to adequately account

[4] On this topic see especially A. Gouldner, "Reciprocity and Autonomy in Functional Theory," in *Symposium on Sociological Theory* ed. L. Gross (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), pp. 241-270. See also Gouldner's *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (New York: Basic Books, 1970).

[5] On the question of the exact meaning of "determine" in this context, see the discussion in J. Plamenatz, *Ideology* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970).

[6] Hobsbawm, "Karl Marx's Contribution": p. 279.

for many types of social change, as its critics and even many of its defenders have noted. This fact undoubtedly helps account for the adoption of neo-evolutionism by some sociologists —including the leading modern functionalist theoretician, Talcott Parsons— and for what Gouldner has called "the drift of the dominant Functionalist and Parsonian models toward a convergence with Marxism.[7]

This rather strange convergence —bringing together Marxism and a theory originally created in large measure as a reaction against it, Karl Marx and Talcott Parsons in the same evolutionary bed— has by no means received unanimous acceptance. Some sociologist students of social change, most notably Robert Nisbet, and many if not most non-Marxist historians, have little use for evolutionism in any of its guises. Nisbet's case is particularly well-argued and deals some legitimate telling blows against all forms of evolutionary theory without, however, being able to offer a viable alternative beyond aimless, helter-skelter historical positivism.[8]

Nisbet's basic claim is that all forms of evolutionism —whether of Augustine, Hegel, Marx, Spencer, Tocqueville, Toynbee, Spencer, or even Parsons— are based on an implied analogy or metaphor of organic growth, an analogy which Nisbet believes inapplicable and fallacious. It is fallacious because it asserts that societies have a "natural" history, that beneath the confusing empirical surface of events lies a hidden normative pattern of growth which is somehow more "real" than the contingent phenomena that imperfectly reflect it. This Nisbet denies. Change for him is *not* directional, history has neither discernible course nor goal, it is neither cyclical nor linear. The metaphor Nisbet finally proposes to describe historical change is that of Brownian movement, the random movement of microscopic particles bombarded by the molecules of the fluid or gas in which they are suspended.[9]

This position further implies that virtually all significant *sources* of change are "exogenous" rather than "endogenous," that is to say that change is provoked from without rather than from within. Forces within a society may produce an ebb and flow of small changes but these do not accumulate to become major structural changes either

[7] Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis*, p. 410.

[8] See his *Social Change and History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969) and his introduction to his edited volume, *Social Change* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

[9] Nisbet, *Social Change*, p. 45.

gradually or in revolutionary upheavals. Society, if left in isolation, will become static; its natural conditions is stasis.

With this, Nisbet simply carries the internal logic of bourgeois structural-functionalism to its ultimate consequences, a strategy which places most of the sources of societal change outside any realm of possible sociological analysis. Most sociologists, not surprisingly, have been reluctant to adopt this strategy. Wilbert Moore, perhaps the best funcionalist analyst of societal change, has tended to stress the cumulative qualities of small changes.[10] Talcott Parsons, on the other hand, has moved from a position stressing exogenous factors to a whole-hearted embrace of the neo-evolutionary heresy, a step taken in his 1964 article on "Evolutionary Universals in Society."[11]

The radical nature of this curious change in Parson's position can be seen in two descriptions of Parson's theory, one made before the change and one after by Gouldner and Nisbet, respectively. Writing in about 1959, Gouldner contrasts "two lines of sociological theory": the Marxist which emphasizes the endogenous sources of change and "the position steming from Comte and passing through Durkheim to Parsons, [which] stresses that system change has to be thought of as deriving from exogenous forces, the system *model* itself not being conceived of as possessing internal sources of disequilibrium."[12] Writing some ten years later, Nisbet can note Parson's distinction between endogenous and exogenous change and remarks: "One can scarcely avoid concluding that Profesor Parson's clear preference —theoretical preference at any rate— is for the endogenous."[13]

But how can Nisbet sustain a position which argues that virtually all change, in fact if not in theory, is non-dirctional and stems from exogenous sources, that society left to itself is stable and static? His position contradicts both our common sense and historical experience. Much change undoubtedly does stem from the effects of cultural contact and diffusion, but certainly not all change. Nisbet's basic strategy to evade this problem is to limit the concept of social change to changes in *social relations* defined in the narrowest possible sense. Thus, in his discussion of Arnold Rose's essay on change in black-white relations in the United State since the late 1950's, Nisbet notes

[10] W.E. Moore, *Social Change* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963).

[11] *American Sociological Review* 29 (1964), 339-57.

[12] Gouldner, "Reciprocity", p. 264.

[13] Nisbet, *Social Change and History*, p. 235.

that the crisis and change must be dealt with "in terms of technological, industrial, and political impacts upon these relations" and especially stresses the "gigantic" factor of the Second World War.[14]

Few "endogenous" analysts, Marxist or otherwise, would want to quarrel with Rose's evaluation. What they might want to question is Nisbet's rigid separation of the concepts of *social* and *societal* change. In practice, change in a *society* must embody change in *social* relations. For Marxists, for instance, the "economic" aspect of society includes, by definition, both the forces and relations of production. These can and do fall out of harmony but cannot be separated in the fashion Nisbet wants to separate them. Changes in the forces and relations of production *are* social as well as societal changes and may stem from either endogenous or exogenous sources.

Marxist theory offers a better-integrated explanation of societal change than does bourgeois structural-functionalism, whether neo-evolutionary or anti–evolutionary. What Marxist historians and political economists often can be criticized for is a denigrating and cavalier attitude toward the importance of historical change induced by exogenous forces. Hobsbawm, for instance, relegates such change to a passing mention. From the Marxist historical point of view, he says:

> ... the internal contradictions of socio-economic systems provide the mechanism for change which becomes development. (Without it, it might be argued that they would produce merely cyclical fluctuation, an endless process of destabilishing and re-stabilising; and, of course, such changes as might arise from the contacts and conflicts of different societies.)

How so excellent a historian can make so absurd an evaluation is not easy to understand. Certainly when Hobsbawm writes history rather than theorizes about it, the changes that "arise from the contacts and conflicts of different societies" are not hidden away in any such parenthetical aside or footnote. This conflict between the theory and *praxis* of the writing of history clearly demands that the theory be revised. To do so, however, Hobsbawm would have to move further away from the "vulgar" Marxist theory he criticizes than he is apparently willing to move.

[14] Nisbet, *Social Change*, p. 33.

What Marxist historical materialism does succeed in doing is to give a coherent and consistent explanation of the internal dynamics of societies and of their long term historical development. Without such a theoretical framework, admitting the possibility of a more coherent alternative, positivistic empiricism can do little more than collect "facts," and perhaps not even that. What Marxist theory does not normally attempt to do, however, is to describe or explain the regularities of historical changes induced by contingent, exogenous factors. Such regularities are not, of course, themselves historical causes or causal factors. Nonetheless they do have explanatory value.

For the historical changes discussed in the essays of this volume the central comparative questions are why and how, in certain cases of societal contact or conflict, massive religious conversion took place, and why and how, in other cases, religious change was minimal or involved the rise of syncretic movements significantly different from the dominant religious traditions of both societies though constructed from elements of both.

This contrast between conversion and syncretism is a basic one, but by no means absolute. They represent contrasting ideal types rather than empirical opposites. Conversion, for instance, almost never carries with it a complete abandonment of former values and beliefs. Something of the old must remain. When, as in the cases discussed in this volume, two different societies come into contact, for a member of one society to abandon his own religion and concomitant moral values for those of another society requires a giant cultural leap beyond most individuals' capacity. This is even more true when the conversions are largely motivated either by fear of punishment or hope of some worldly gain. In these circumstances, the nominal converts usually adopt a strategy of minimal adherence to the new and maximum preservation of the old.

Frequently, such forced or semi-forced conversions involve entire social groups, such as castes in the case of South Asia, or even whole societies as in the case of Central Mexico. In such contexts the maintainance of social continuity and coherence helps limit still further the adoption of new beliefs and values. Even several generations after the initial conversion significant aspects of former religious traditions are likely to remain. William Madsen reports, for instance, that in modern Mexico, pre-Christian values still exercise visible and considerable influence, over 400 years after the process of conversion was supposedly completed.

Whatever its limitations, however, formal conversion almost always embodies at least a partial willingness to accept the beliefs and values of the new religion as well as a commitment to perform its exterior rites and ceremonies. Even in cases of forced or hypocritical conversion, the children of the new converts are likely to willingly accept the new religion. Former beliefs and values may still survive, but not in the form of a coherent system. Little by little the old gods are forgotten, to be invoked only for peripheral concerns or in cases when all other remedies have failed. Such isolated vestiges of largely abandoned traditions may count as syncretic tendencies but do not constitute full-fledged syncretism.

Syncretism is an equally, perhaps more difficult concept to define precisely. It commonly refers to a set of religious beliefs and practices and moral values which are borrowed from two or more previously existing religious traditions. Helmer Ringgren defines it simply as "any mixture of two or more religions."[16] But this is in a sense true of all religions, as Ringgren admits. Christianity is said to have arisen as an amalgam of Judaism and Hellenistic philosophy and mystery cults; Islam as a combination of Judaism, Christianity and Arab tribal religion; Hinduism as a mixture of Aryan tribal religion and varied indigenous cults. Can we then call all these religions syncretic? I think not. The term must either be given more precise definitional limits or abandoned.

W.H. McLeod would prefer to adopt the latter tactic and substitute the terms "influence," "assimilation" and "synthesis." This does solve some difficulties, but I think it largely ignores at least two types of phenomena for which syncretism is a viable analytical category. Defined with more precision, the term syncretism refers to a usually transitory combination of two or more cultural or religious traditions in which there is an incomplete integration of the constituent components. Once these components are integrated into a unified system in which their original diversity of origin has been effectively erased, made virtually invisible to both external and internal observers, it becomes inappropriate to speak of this system as syncretic in any meaningful sense.

One case in which such incomplete integration occurs is that of new religious movements which attempt to mediate between conflicting

[16] "The Problem of Syncretism" in *Syncretism* ed. S.S. Hartman (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1969), p. 7.

cultural traditions belonging to societies brought relatively suddenly into close contact, usually through the conquest of one by another. Most of the many different millenarian religious movements in differents parts of the world clearly belong to this category. Scholars have also often identified the Kabīr and Sikh *panths* of India as syncretic movements of this type. Recent studies have tended to emphasize, quite correctly, that both these movements owe more to Hindu than to Muslim tradition. It is also true, as I point out below, that the Kabīr panth, especially, has become little more than a Hindu sect in the course of its history. It is also clear, however, that both the Kabīr panth and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the Sikh panth were originally attempts to independently mediate the conflicting Hindu and Muslim cultural traditions. That Kabīr apparently largely rejected both traditions does not significantly alter the fact that he borrowed from both. To the extent that he did so, his preachings may be described as syncretic. Gurū Nānak and the Sikh panth are a somewhat more problematic case since clearly Muslim terminology is little evident in the religious songs of Nānak and his early successors. Nonetheless, I do not think that McLeod is fully justified in rejecting the syncretic label as categorically as he does.

The second type of incomplete integration of different religious traditions worthy of being called syncretism occurs when the component traditions continue to exist side by side with each having its own particular area of competence. In such cases the new "dual" (or "multiple") system which is established may have considerable durability thanks to its rough division of labor, but the component subsystems remain, in some respects, logically or functionally incomparatible and partly retain their separate systemic identities.

Perhaps the most clearcut examples of such dual or multiple religious systems are those of Indonesia and Southeast Asia in which "great" and "little" traditions of radically different character and origin combine together in a relatively stable but uneasy alliance [17] William Madsen documents the existence of a similar dual tradition in Mexico though, in this case, the elements of the non-Christian "little" traditions are rather more submerged and do not maintain

[17] See in this connection, C. Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960); M. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes* (New York: Harper-Row, 1970); S.J. Tambiah, *Buddhism and Spirit Cults in Northeastern Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

the same degree of systemic cohesiveness as the little traditions of Southeast Asia and Indonesia.

We can accept then that both conversion and syncretism are useful analytical categories which are best understood as contrasting ideal types applicable in varying degrees to a wide range of empirical historical phenomena. Under what sorts of historical situations does syncretism become the dominant mode of religious change and under what sorts of situations conversion? There are, I think, three principal variables which determine the religious consequences of cultural contact between societies with different religious traditions: (1) the mode and extent of contact, (2) the different levels of economic and scientific development of the societies, and (3) the nature of their respective moral values and religious beliefs and practices.

The possible modes of contact between societies are many. For obvious reasons, most historical examples of contact leading to religious change have involved the domination of one society by another. At the most direct level this means the military conquest of one society by another. In other cases, however, the domination may be principally economic, political or cultural and not involve outright conquest. During the past five hundred years, the dynamic, aggressive societies of Christian Europe have extended their influence over the Americas and later Asia and Africa. In the Americas and Australia this meant military conquest, virtual genocide and colonization. South and Southeast Asia and the islands (Indonesia and the Philippines) were conquered but never extensively colonized. In the cases of China and Japan, the domination was primarily, though by no means exclusively, economic and political. In Africa all three methods were applied. Since the end of the Second World War, domination through military conquest has become less practicable, but new methods of cultural domination through mass media have stregthened new and old forms of economic and political domination. Well before the rise of modern Europe the military expansion of Arab and other Muslim peoples was almost as dramatic. By the end of the thirteenth century the regions under Muslim rule extended from Spain through North Africa, the so-called Middle East, Persia, and most of South Asia. In later centuries Islam extended into Indonesia and parts of black Africa, mostly by more pacific modes of domination.

These various modes of domination differ in their implications for the nature and extent of religious change chiefly because of the different levels and types of penetration of one society by another in each

case. In cases such as Mexico, where there occurred both conquest and extensive colonization by an aggressive and self-confident people, the penetration of the native society was such that conversion was in the long run inevitable. That the Mayas were able to resist conversion longer than the Indians of Central Mexico was due in part to the slower colonization of Yucatan and to the difficulties the Spanish encountered in penetrating a society whose political and religious organization was highly decentralized. In central Mexico the liquidation of the political leaders and priesthood of the centralized state left the confused and demoralized indigenous society open to the fanatical missionary endeavors of the Franciscans.

The penetration of the Muslim Arabs into the different societies they conquered varied considerably as the articles of Levtzion, Rizvi and Johns show. It is also evident that even in so theocratic a society as that of the Arabs the primary motivation for conquest was territorial expansion. Religious conversion was a secondary aim and was accomplished only gradually. Similarly, the specific motivations for both fomenting and accepting conversion were never purely spiritual. Nonetheless, the entry of the Arabs into dominant positions in the economic, political and cultural spheres of the conquered societies was such that the work of *formal* conversion was nearly complete within one or two generations.

Islam penetrated into South Asia principally through the conquest of the region by Central Asian Turks with a cultural base in Persia. Colonization was practised, but not on a massive scale. Although conversion was rarely forced, it was promoted by both political rulers and religious missionaries. Nonetheless, the percentage of Muslims in the total population never exceeded ten or twenty per cent except in the extreme northeast and northwest and a few smaller regions. The segmentary, acephalous structure of caste society and Hindu tradition allowed each small social group to maintain quite different social and cultural institutions. This made effectively diffused penetration of the society by Islam virtually impossible. The physical presence of the Muslims was accepted, even as rulers, but they were isolated from the rest of the population by the complex rules of social interaction of the dominated society —most importantly those prohibiting intermarriage.

Penetration of a dominated society by sufficiently large numbers of persons from a dominant society is bound to lead to the religious and general cultural conversion of the subordinate society. In cases where

the penetration is by less that overwhelming numbers, the other two factors I have posited —relative levels of economic development and the character of the interacting cultural traditions— assume greater importance.

In most, though not all, historical cases the dominant society is also more advanced economically and technologically. Historians of premodern periods sometimes overlook this obvious fact because of the existence of a class of dramatic exceptions, or partial exceptions, to the general rule: the instances of conquest of "civilized" agricultural peoples by warlike, nomadic "barbarians" of the hinterlands. To some extent, this model applies both to the expansion of the Muslim Arabs, particularly into Persia, and of the Muslim Central Asian Turks into India. A close examination of these and other such examples, however, reveals that the gap between the two societies, above all in terms of military technology, was not as great as it first appeared. It is true that societies based on sedentary agriculture generally have a higher level of economic, and hence cultural, development than esentially pastoral societies. The latter, however, have the military advantages of greater mobility and the lack of cultivated fields and cities to defend. When these advantages are combined with a near equal or even superior level of military technology, i.e. better weapons or tactics, the pastoral society is sometimes able to conquer its more densely populated and more civilized neighbor. Even in these circumstances, it is usually also the case that the more sedentary culture is going through an internally or environmentally induced economic and political crisis. This was true for both Persia and South Asia on the eve of the successful Muslim invasions. It is equally true of Mexico at the time of the Spanish conquest though, in this case, there is no doubt of the overall economic and technological superiority of the Europeans. What is astounding is the initial numerical disparity.

When the economy and technology of the dominant society are clearly superior, the conquered people do not long hesistate in trying to adopt its mode of production and asociated cultural traditions, or at least adapt them to their own needs and conditions. In Mexico, where the economic and technological superiority of the Spanish was imposed by force and accompanied by ample colonization, the result was massive conversion, though with a covert undercurrent of syncretism. In contrast, in Indonesia the penetration of Islam was primarily pacific and never involved extensive colonization. Islamic culture and economy were clearly superior, however, and this fact seems to have

been largely sufficient to induce considerable, though not massive, conversion and the creation of an openly syncretic, dual tradition.

The third major variable to consider is that of the nature of the moral values and religious beliefs and practices of the societies which interact. Both Christianity and Islam are aggresive, prophetic religions which demand an absolute and exclusive adherence to their values, beliefs and practices. Their avowed aim is the conversion of all mankind and the eradication of all other religious traditions, including each other. Few other religious traditons have shared these characteristics. Most have been religiously latitudinarian and generally open to syncretic tendencies. This has meant that where the dominated society has been converted to Christianity or Islam, syncretic tendencies have often had to remain partly disguised. The old and new gods and their prophets could not simply be set down together, Jesus and Muhammad shoulder to shoulder with Huitzilopochtli, Zoroaster and Viṣṇu. Where syncretic tendencies did find a partly open door was into the vast storehouse of the cult of saints. Popular Christianity and Islam have always paid as much or more attention to the adoration of saints and pīrs, both living and dead, as to the monotheistic worship of the unitary godhead of theology. The popular Catholicism of Mexico has preserved continuity with pre-conquest religion above all in the cult of Virgin of Guadalupe, who some still call Tonantzin, a Nahuatl name for the pre-Columbian mother goddess. This does not imply that the ancient cult has been convertly maintained under a new name as somewhat disingenuous scholars sometimes tend to believe. Even so sophisticated an analyst as Madsen seems to me to lean in this direction. The cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe is Christian, not pagan. But, as Jacques Lafaye has so elegantly argued, it is a distinctively Mexican Christianity, one which in its initial stages served as a psychological bridge from the old religion to the new.[18] A somewhat similar role was played by the cult of the talking crosses in the Mayan cultural region, though there the pagan element was stronger and the level of Christianization correspondingly weaker.

According to Madsen, the Spanish had greater difficulty in imposing Christian orthodoxy in the Mayan region, principally because the dispersed mode of settlement and lack of centralized religious and political institutions made the eradication of the old culture and pene-

[18] *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness: 1531-1813*, trans. B. Keen (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974).

tration of the new much more difficult than in Central Mexico. In South Asia and Indonesia the imposition of Islamic orthodoxy was at least as difficult for similar reasons. In Indonesia this led to the establishment of a syncretic dual religious tradition, half Muslim and half indigenous folk region, in all but the coastal cities where Islam had a firmer footing. In South Asia the effects of the cultural encounter between Hinduism and Islam were somewhat different. On the one hand, there was a tendency for the Hindu and Muslim communities to simply move apart, to withdraw into their different cultural traditions. Muslim orthodoxy anathematized the politheistic latitudinarianism of Hinduism, while the Hindus proscribed the social integration of Muslim on any terms other than their own, namely those of caste. Nonetheless, there was considerable convergence of the two religious traditions in the popular worship of Hindu saints (*sant*) and Muslim pīrs, a syncretic tendency similar to the conflating of Christian saints and Amerindian gods. Most interesting, in this connection, were the sectarian movements of Kabīr and Nānak. Both movements were necessarily more Hindu than Muslim, since Islam is less congenial than Hinduism to syncretic beliefs and practices and since the indigenous Hindu tradition remained culturally dominant in any case. I have noted above that both attempted, at least in their initial stages, to move outside the mainstream of Hinduism in an independent direction, though the extent to which this move implied syncretism between Islam and Hinduism and a break with the latter is a matter of debate. The Kabīr panth in particular has become a thoroughly Hinduized sect whose main appeal is to marginal groups such as untouchables and tribals who seek an entry into Hinduism and caste society free of many of the more degrading beliefs and practices associated with Brahmanic "orthodoxy".

In these pages I have argued that structural-functional theories of social change —both Marxist and bourgeois varieties— generally fail to adequately account for social change as it occurs in many specific historical contexts. Marxist theory has the virtue of avoiding a counterproductive separation between history and social science, the diachronic and the syncronic. On the other hand, in their theoretical emphasis on large scale endogenous processes of change, Marxists tend to ignore, as incidental, changes induced by contacts between different societies. Bourgeois structural-functional theory usually emphasizes social equilibrium and stasis. Although minor endogenous changes are admitted, for Parsons even gradual evolutionary ones, the basic

logic of most varieties of this theoretical model is to locate the sources of important changes outside the social system. These sources are essentially historical accidents and hence impervious to sociological analysis. History is left to the descriptive narrations of positivist historians and the analysis of social relations to the sociologists, with only an occasional word or two passed between them.

The historical examples of religious change discussed in this volume all stem from cases of contact between different societies, both by conquest and peaceful diffusion. As a result, they are difficult to accommodate within an evolutionary model of historical change, Marxist or otherwise, unless the universe of discourse is expanded to embrace the whole "world system." On the other hand, if these examples are relegated to the charge of positivistic historians, there is no point in comparing them; each becomes a unique case best left to itself. What I have tried to do is to point out some of the regularities in the interaction between the different societies which make comparison possible and useful. In all the cases considered, one society was generally dominant and the other dominated. The most dramatic religious changes took place in the dominated society, though the religion of the dominant society was also significantly affected. The principal patterns of change were those of conversion and syncretism, terms which can best be understood as contrasting ideal types which never, or at best rarely, occur empirically in an unambiguous form. The nature and extent of change resulting from the interaction between the societies concerned seems to have been determined by three principal variables: the extent and character of the penetration by the dominant society, the different modes and levels of development of the societies, and the nature of their respective value systems. Comparative analysis inevitably runs the risk of oversimplifying the complexities of each specific example, but without it we are left with no overall framework for understanding what we study.

Conversion Under Muslim Domination: A Comparative Study

Nehemia Levtzion

The present essay is part of a comprehensive study of Islamization in which I am engaged.[1] It is based on a view of the Muslim world as a whole, in spite of its regional diversity, and on the assumption that the particular and the universal in the process of Islamization may be better appreciated through a comparative study. There are, I know, many pitfalls in such a venture, and mainly because no one can pretend to have an intimate knowledge of the history and culture of all the regions which are brought into a comparative study.

In this paper I shall, of course, expose myself to criticism not only for spreading the net extensively over all the lands under Muslim domination, but also for choosing such a general title. In fact I shall deal here, perhaps too briefly, with several topics, each deserving a more detailed treatment and a more careful examination of the evidence. I have done so in order to raise a number of comparable themes and to suggest some general patterns of religious change under political domination.

1. *Military conquest and conversion to Islam*

The expansion of Islam as a religion is sometimes too narrowly associated with the military expansion of Islam. An analytical distinction between the two processes is necessary, not only because Islam as a religion spread beyond the limits of the Muslim military expansion (to Africa. Indonesia and China); but also because military conquest itself was not immediately followed by widespread conversion to Islam.

According to the political theory of Islam, the imposition of Mus-

[1] See N. Levtzion, "Conversion to Islam: Some Notes towards a Comparative Study," *Actes du 29e congrès international des orientalistes. Études arabes et islamiques: I. Histoire et civilization*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1975), pp. 125-9. See also the introductory essay to the forthcoming volume *Conversion to Islam*, edited by N. Levtzion.

lim rule was sufficient to change the status of a country and make it part of *dār al-Islām* ("the abode of Islam"), even if the population of that country was entirely or predominantly non-Muslim. The *sharī'a* recognizes the existence of a non-Muslim populariom within the Muslim state. In other words, both in practice and in theory, the principal aim of the military conquest was territorial expansion rather than conversion.[2]

The Fertile Crescent and Egypt, Iran and Spain were conquered after the Arabs had defeated imperial armies. The civilian population, which had not taken part in the military struggle, passively changed allegiance, and was left undisturbed. In fact, the lack of religious pressure made it easier to consolidate Muslim rule, and by refraining from antagonizing the local population, the authorities obtained its cooperation by maintaining the administrative structures of the former empires. Institutional continuity and minimal social and economic disruption were not conductive to religious change.

Beyond the frontiers of the former empires, as in Transoxania, or outside the effective control of those empires, as in the Berber hinterland of the Maghrib, larger sections of the population were involved in resisting the Arabs' encroachment. Such regions had to be reconquered several times after recurring revolts had forced the Arabs to retreat. In Muslim historiography the revolts in Bukhara and in the Maghrib, which brought about a temporary regression of dār al Islām, are presented as apostasy *(ridda)*, the same term being used as in the case of the political and religious secession of the Arab tribes after the death of the Prophet.[3] It was therefore in these regions that the Muslim conquerors sought to consolidate their political domination by promoting religious adherence to Islam among the local populations.

In Bukhara, the Arab conqueror Qutayba b. Muslim destroyed fire-temples, built mosques and rewarded those who attended the Friday prayer at the mosque with a grant of two dirhams.[4] In another remote

[2] G.E. von Grunebaum, "The First Expansion of Islam: Factors of Thrust and Containment," *Diogenes* 53 (1966): 65-66.

[3] Narshakhī, *The History of Bukhara*, trans. R.N. Frye (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p. 48, [translated from a Persian abridgement of the Arabic original].
Ibn Khaldun, *Kitāb ta'rīkh al-duwal al-islāmiyya min Kitāb al-'ibar*, ed. M.G. de Slane, vol. 1 (Paris, 1947), p. 136; translated by M.G. de Slane as *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1925), p. 215.

[4] Narshakhī, *History of Bukhara*, p. 49.

and intractable province, Sijistan, the governor al-Rabī b. Ziyād (651-2) initiated a systematic policy of Islamization. Local chronicles describe him as a righteous ruler, who brought in *ulamā,'* compelled the local population to study the Koran and converted many Zoroastrians.[5] In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Muslim rulers of Bengal sought to strengthen their hold over the country by encouraging conversion. They supported the missionary work of Sufi saints, but they also intervended directly by dispensing favors and applying pressure.[6]

Throughout the Muslim world and at different periods, there were other examples of measures taken by the Muslim authorities to promote conversion to Islam in order to bolster their political control. Let us dare a giant's leap in time and space from the early centuries of Islam in the eastern provinces of Iran to contemporary Africa. In northern Nigeria, Muslim political domination was imposed by conquest in the early nineteenth century. The creation of Muslim state and the development of Islamic institutions accelerated a process of Islamization, which had begun many centuries earlier. As elsewhere, converts to Islam benefited from material advantages by joining the religious community of the rulers. But, as long as Muslim rule in northern Nigeria depended on its own military and political strength (in the precolonial period) or on the support of the British administration (during the colonial period), there was no evidence of any official policy to encourage conversion.

During the decolonization and post-independence periods, the Muslim ruling elite in northern Nigeria felt that its hold over the country was challenged through the competition of rival parties in parliamentary elections inside and outside the northern Region. The ruling elite decided to make Islam the corner-stone of a united northern front. For this purpose, they sought to bring more ethnic groups of the north into the fold of Islam, and the premier of the region, the Sardauna of Sokoto, headed an official campaign of conversion which reached its peak in 1964-65, when the political struggle in Nigeria was the most intense.[7]

[5] C.E. Bosworth, *Sistan under the Arabs; 651-864* (Rome, 1968), p. 23.

[6] K.S. Lal, *Growth of Muslim Population in Medieval India* (Delhi, 1973), pp. 174-9.

[7] C.S. Whitaker, *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria: 1946-1966* (Princeton, 1970), pp. 349-50; J. Gilliland, "African Traditional Religion in Transition: The Influence of Islam on African Traditional Religion in

In recent years, there is some evidence that Iddi Amin of Uganda exploits the power of the regime to advance the cause of Islam and to promote conversion. According to the official census of 1959, Muslims formed only 5.4 percent of the population of Uganda.[8] But Iddi Amin, who has discovered the political potential of Islam, seeks to widen the public basis of Islam in Uganda by increasing the number of Muslims.[9]

Conversion under the direct impact of military conquest or through the pressure of political domination often proved to be ephemeral and reversible after the pressure had been removed. Following the conquest of Sind in 711-2, some Indian princes adhered to Islam. But soon after the Arab conqueror Muhammad b. al-Qasim had left Sind with most of the Arab troops, and the Arabs' hold over the country had weakened, many Indian princes regained their independence and renegaded.[10] In West Africa, many of those who had been nominally converted under the domination of the Tijani Empire of Segu reverted to their traditional religions when this empire was destroyed by the French conquest.[11] In the same manner, many of those who had registered as Muslims under the Sardauna of Sokoto in 1964-65 ceased to be Muslims shortly after the fall of the Sardauna, as a result of the coup d'état of January 1966.

In all the examples given above, the pressure to induce conversion had not been kept up long enough to enable Islam to take root. Generally speaking, the process of Islamization progressed and matured over a long period in a Muslim ambience created by the development of Muslim religious and communal institutions, and not as the direct and immediate consequence of Muslim political domination.

Our comparative excursion in search of examples for an official policy to promote conversion has taken us to the frontiers of the militant

Transition: The Influence of Islam on African Traditional Religion in North Nigeria," (Ph. D. diss., The Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1971), pp. 274-6; M. Last, "Some Economic Aspects of Conversion to Islam in Hausaland (Nigeria)," *Conversion to Islam*, ed. N. Levtzion (forthcoming).

[8] J. Cuaq, *Les Musulmanes en Afrique* (Paris 1975) p. 436.

[9] Reports on mass conversion in Uganda were reported in the *Voice of Uganda*, 11 December 1972 and 7 March 1973.

[10] Y. Friedmann, "A Contribution to the Early History of Islam in India", in the forth coming *Gaston Wiet's Memorial Volume*; See also K.S. Lal. *Growth*, p. 99.

[11] J.S. Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa* (London, 1962), p. 163; B.O. Oloruntumin, *The Segu Tukulor Empire* (London, 1972,) pp. 316-7.

expansion of Islam. In the central provinces of the Arab Empire there were also cases of conversion promoted for political aims. In 696, an Arab who led a rebellion against the governor of Khurasan promised an exemption from taxation to those who would embrace Islam. He did so in order to win the support of the local population.[12] A similar promise was made in 744 by a deposed governor of Egypt seeking to regain his former position with the aid of the local population.[13] The very fact that such promises were made only proves that, in general, the Arab authorities did not encourage conversion and were reluctant to exempt converts from paying the tax to which non-Muslims were liable.

2. *The position of non-Muslims in the Muslim state: from tolerance to compulsion*

Exemption from the poll tax was demanded by the *mawālī*, the non-Arab converts to Islam, and became a central issue in the politics of the Ummayyad period. It became closely connected to the question as to whether non—Arab Muslims should be granted equal status to that of the Arabs, and whether mutual assimilation should be allowed. The issue was decided by the Abbasid revolution, which was initiated by the assimilated society of Khurasan. It marked the shift from an Arab identity to a Muslim identity, and eliminated the ambiguity in the official policy of the Muslim state towards conversion.

As the distinction between Arabs and non—Arabs within the Muslim society became blurred, differences between Muslims and non—Muslims within the Muslim state became more marked. By the ninth century, the proportion of Muslims in the population had increased and the doctrinal and legal framework of Islam had been established. The influence of the *'ulamā'* —exponents of the religious law— increased, over both the rulers and the people. Growing religious consciousness bred intolerance towards the non-Muslims.

Under the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawwakil (847-61), the discriminating regulations against non-Muslims, as stipulated in the *sharī'a*, were officially and strictly applied for the first time. On this occasion,

[12] H.A.R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (London, 1923), p. 24. D.C.

[13] D.C. Dennett Conversion and Poll Tax in Early Islam (Cambridge, 1950). p. 86: I.M. Lapidus, "The Conversion of Egypt to Islam," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 252.

230163

and in the following centuries, the strict enforcement of these regulations resulted in the conversion of many wishing to escape humiliation or to retain their high positions.

One may discern two major trends in the attitude towards non-Muslims: one reflecting the views of the political authorities, and the other, the view point of the 'ulamā'. The rulers, guided by the pragmatic demands of government, needed the services of the non-Muslims and were inclined to refrain from enforcing the discriminatory regulations. The 'ulamā' considered this policy an affront to Islam and a violation of the sharī'a. The 'ulama' generated the masses' resentment of the non-Muslims, in particular of those who held governmental positions. With the economic decline of the Muslim world in the late Middle Ages, intolerance increased.

The rulers submitted to the combined pressure of the 'ulamā' and the masses, and enforced the discriminatory regulations. During such periods of duress, which became more frequent between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, more individual and group conversions were reported. In this atmosphere of religious fanaticism non-Muslims were sometimes exposed to physical harm, and many converted to save their lives and property.[14]

Such pressures were particularly strong and effective in Egypt since, more than any other land under Muslim rule, it had a strong and fairly cohesive Christian community in the late Middle Ages —an era of increasing intolerance. Also non-Muslims were more prominent in public service there than in other countries. Under the Mamelukes, in the first half of the fourteenth century, official pressure and popular persecutions brought about a sharp drop in the number of Copts.[15]

The attitude toward the non-Muslims, and in particular the Christians, was influenced by external political events. The Crusades increased the animosity toward Christians, and the Christians' support of

[14] For the development of official policies and popular attitudes towards the non-Muslims, see A.S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects* (London, 1930); E. Strauss (Ashtor), "The social isolation of *ahl al-dhimma*," in *Etudes orientales à la mèmorire de P. Hirschler* (Budapest, 1950); S.D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts through the Ages* (New York, 1955), pp. 67-9; C. Cahen, "*Dhimma*", in *EI*, vol. 2, pp. 227-230.

[15] E. Ashtor, A. *History of the Jews in Egypt and Syria*, vol. I (Jerusalem, 1944) [in Hebrew]; D. Richards, "The Coptic Bureaucracy under the Mamluks," *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire* (Cairo, 1972), pp. 373-81.

the Mongols provoked violent reactions. The reconquest of Spain fanned Muslim fanaticism in that country.

The Seljuk sultans of Rum generally pursued a liberal policy towards their non-Muslim subjects. Both the sultans and the dervishes combined a zealous missionary spirit with tolerance towards non-Muslims. Broad-mindedness and leniency proved effective in promoting conversion.[16] Christian sources, however, record cases of forced conversions. The existence of crypto-Christians, who could expect absolution from the Church, may have been the result of forced conversions. But one cannot rule out the possibility that those Christians were torn between the lure of material benefits promised to converts and their anxiety to secure Christian salvation.[17]

Muslim historiography in India emphasizes the nonviolent, missionary aspects of conversion to Islam.[18] But Hindu traditions record cases of forced conversions, which are associated with certain rulers such as Sikandar of Kashmir (1389-1413), Jalal al-Din of Bengal (1414-31) and, in particular, with the Mughal sultan Aurangzib (1658-1707).[19]

The latter's reign marked the ascendency of Islamic orthodoxy in India in reaction to the latitudinarian policy of al-Akbar (1556-1605). Whereas al-Akbar sought a rapprochement between Muslims and Hindus, the orthodox 'ulamā' demanded a strict application of the rules of the sharī'a in relation to non-Muslims.[20]

Hindu bankers and traders dominated important sectors of the eco-

[16] O. Turan, "Les souveraines Seldjukides et leurs sujets non-musulmans," *Studia Islamica* 1 (1953): 66-8.

[17] F.W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. 2 (Lodon, 1929), pp. 470-3; S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971), pp. 177-8, 360-1; V.L. Ménage, "The Islamization of Anatolia," in N. Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (forthcoming).

[18] P. Hardy, "Modern Europeans and Muslim interpretation of conversion to Islam", in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. N. Levtzion (forthcoming). Peter Hardy refers to such modern Muslim historians as I.H. Qureshi and S.M. Ikram.

[19] T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (Lahore, 1914), pp. 261-5; I.H. Qureshi, "Muslim India before the Mughals," in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1970), p. 25.

[20] T.H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent: 610-1947*. (The Hague, 1962). pp. 149-63; Y. Friedman. *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (Montreal, 1971). pp. 73-5, 85.

nomy in the Mughal Empire, and had considerable influence over the government's finances. Hindus served in prominent positions in the administration. Even the 'ulamā' often found themselves depending on Hindu officials, bankers or merchants, which exacerbated their resentment towards non-Muslims.[21] But in India, the Muslims always remained a minority, and therefore did not reach the stage at which religious intolerance generates popular animosity whithin the majority against a dominated religious minority.

We have dealt at some length with the role of the Muslim state in promoting conversion, but it appears that, in spite of the many examples given, direct intervention of the political authorities in exerting pressure or bestowing favors was somewhat limited and sporadic. It certainly cannot explain the conversion of the majority of the people in territories under Muslim rule.

More important, perhaps, is the support given by the Muslim state to Islamic institutions. The establishment of mosques, *madāris, zawāya*, and *caravanserais* created a Muslim city, even when the majority of its population still adhered to its former religion, and created that Islamic ambience which induced people to convert.

Prominent among the Islamic institutions as active agents of Islamization were the sufi orders. Whereas the established 'ulamā' acted mainly within the Islamic society, the sufis went out to establish contacts with non-Muslims and penetrated other societies. By emphasizing the common religious experiences (such as the belief in healing and the worship of shrines and saints, they encouraged the rural and tribal masses to embrace Islam. In Anatolia and India the political authorities supported the missionary work of the dervishes.[22] The latter also played an important part in spreading Islam in the Sudan after the creation of the Muslim states of Sennar and Darfur.[23] In the Maghrib, the *marabouts* ("sufi saints") offered a more meaningful

[21] S.A.A. Rizvi, "The Breakdown of Traditional Society [in India]," in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 2, pp. 67-8.

[22] S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Hellenism*, pp. 352-4; J.S. Trimingham. *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 20-4; A. Rahim, "The Saints in Bengal," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 8 (1960): p. 206.

[23] Y.F. Hasan, *The Arabs and the Sudan* Edinburgh, 1967), pp. 179-80; P. Holt, "The Islamization of the Nilotic Sudan," in *Northern Africa: Islam and Modernization*, ed. M. Brett (London, 1973), pp. 16-8; R.S. O'Fahey and J.L. Spaulding, *Kingdoms of the Sudan* (London 1974), pp. 72-3, 123-4.

religious experience in the tribal hinterland and improved on the earlier nominal adhesion of the Berbers to Islam.[24] But the role of the Sufis was by no means specific to conversion under Muslim rule. They also played an important part in spreading Islam beyond the limits of its militant expansion in Indonesia and in Africa.

3. *Stratification, social classes and religious change*

People do not willingly change their religion unless their social status is threatened or conversion helps to maintain or improve it. During the first century of the *hijra*, the Arabs were reluctant to extend any of their own privileges to the conquered peoples and, therefore, did not generate any motivation for conversion. But a closer examination of the evidence suggests that the Arabs adopted a different policy towards selected groups.

Members of an elite corps of the Iranian cavalry, the *asāwira*, converted after the defeat of the Sasanid imperial army. They were incorporated into the Arab army and were allocated the same pension *('ata')* as the Arab *muqātila* ("warriors"). The Arabs, it appears, were concerned as much with the status of the converts as with their ethnic affiliation. The *dahāqīn*, members of the Iranian landed aristocracy, who converted, were exempted from the poll tax. In the Sasanid Empire, the poll tax was levied only from the masses and denoted a low social status. The dahaqin converted in order to evade the poll tax, not because of the fiscal burden it represented, but because they considered it humiliating.[25]

At the risk of a sweeping generalization, one may say that, in many cases, people maintained their social status when they went through the process of religious change. Warriors were concerned with maintaining their status, as were members of the conquered nobility and officials in public service. The conquerors were willing to integrate, into their respective classes, those likely to be useful to the Muslim state. Conversion could facilitate integration, although it was not always a condition.

[24] G.H. Bousquet, *L'islam maghrebin* (Alger, 1954), pp. 64 160-1 ; M. Brett, "The Spread of Islam in Egypt and North Africa," in *Northern Africa*, ed. M. Brett, pp. 7-9.

[25] D.C. Dennett, *Conversion and Poll Tax*, p. 15, 31-3; M.G. Morony, "The effects of the Muslim Conquest on the Persian Population of Iraq" (forthcoming).

In Spain, Christian families of the upper classes who had converted to Islam maintained their status within the Muslim society.[26]

Members of the Christian military elite in the Balkans were incorporated into the military-administrative establishment of the empire while still adhering to their own religion. But as they became socially isolated from the Christian communities, they gradually were assimilated with the Turks.[27]

Whereas conversion to Islam to preserve social status, property or office occurred mainly among the upper classes of the dominated society, conversion to improve economic conditions occurred among the lower clases. It was among the poor that the poll tax may have been a serious economic burden, and they, more than members of the middle classes, may have converted to ease this burden.[28] When Qutayba b. Muslim promised two dirhams to all those who would attend the Friday prayer at the mosque, he attracted converts from among the poor people of Bukhara. Material privileges were often used to promote conversion, as a European visitor to Anatolia reported at the end of the fourteenth century: "The great lords shew particular honour to him [the new convert] and make him rich; this they do that Christians may be more willing to be converted to their faith."[29]

The relation between social stratification and religious change has a special significance in India, because of the caste system. Some historians contrasted the egalitarian nature of Islam with the rigid stratification of Indian society and concluded that Islam may have attracted members of the lower classes who hoped to improve their social status.[30] Without entering into a detailed discussion of this complicated issue, one may say that some of the basic facts do not support such a simplistic explication. First, there was no widespread conversion among the lower classes, and second, the Muslim society in India is more rigidly stratified than other Muslim societies. Converts

[26]H. Terrasse, "L'Espagne musulmane et l'heritage visigothique", *Etudes d'orientalisme dediées à la mêmoire de Lêvi-Provençal*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1962), p. 762.

[27] H. Inalcik, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954), 113-117; T.W. Arnold. *The Preaching of Islam*. p. 195.

[28] Cf. S.D. Goiten, "Evidence on the Muslim Poll Tax from Non-Muslim Sources," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 6 (1965).

[29] Report by Schiltberger, quoted in S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Hellenism*, pp. 357-

[30] See T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, pp. 270-2, 291-4. Views of other historians are discussed in P. Hardy, "Modern European and Muslim Interpretation" (forthcoming).

seem to have moved from the Hindu to the Muslim society while maintaining their social status.[31] (One should add, however, that social stratification in Muslim society did not have the religious sanction it did in Hindu society).

The progress of Islamization in India was slower than in almost all other territories which were under Muslim rule for several centuries. In Delhi and Agra, close to the centers of Muslim power, the Muslims formed no more than a quarter of the population. It appears, therefore, that in India one has to explain the slow place of conversion and its limitations, rather than a successful process. Many factors must be taken into account, and we shall refer to these in other sections of this paper. In the present context, however, one may say that rigid social structures may have hampered the spread of Islam . Since the time of the first Arab conqueror, Muhammad b. al-Qasim, at the beginning of the eighth century, Muslim rulers ratified the eminent position of the Brahmans. In India, therefore, prestige did not exclusively belong to those who possessed political power but also to the Brahmans, custodians of the spiritual heritage.[32]

The survival of a stratified society almost intact halted the progress of Islam in India. In places like Iran and the Balkans, where Islam had first been adopted by the upper classes and only later penetrated other levels of society, religious change had only a limited affect on the sctructure of the dominated society and allowed the survival of the pre-Islamic cultural heritage. By retaining their positions of leadership the upper clases shielded the dominated society from the penetration of the dominating society. Such a penetration, with its disruptive consequences, occurred mainly in regions where nomads played an active role.

4. *The role of the nomads*

One of the salient features of the militant expansion of Islam is the role of the nomads. In the seventh and eighth centuries the Arabs,

[31] A.C. Mayer, "Hind [Ethnography]," in *EI*, vol. 3, p. 411.

[32] Such an explanation is offered by P. Hardy, "Modern European and Muslim Interpretation" (forthcoming). On the position of the Brahmans following the Arab conquest, see Y. Friedmann, "Contribution to the Early History of Islam in India" (forthcoming).

nomads from the hot deserts, established Muslim domination from Iran to Spain. From the eleventh century, the Turks, nomads from the cold steppes, extended the rule of Islam to India and Asia Minor.[33] Even in West Africa, where Islamization progressed through the work of trades and men of religion, militant expressions of Islam were associated with nomads. The sanhaja of the Sahara created the Almoravid movement in the eleventh century, and the Fulbe herdsmen fought the *jihads* of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Conquest by nomads was followed, where geographical and political conditions permitted, by migration and settlement of the conquerors and their kin in the conquered territories. Such a process, which has demographical and ecological implications, effectuates an intensive penetration into the dominated society and brings about a religious change (Islamization) as well as a cultural and ethnic change (Arabization or Turkification). The depth of the penetration and the extent of the cultural and religious changes were conditioned by the nature of the conquest and the character of the nomads' invasion.

In his study of the Islamization of Anatolia, Speros Vryonis compared the Arab conquest of the Fertile Crescent to the Turkish conquest of Anatolia.[34] The Arab conquest was accomplished within the relatively short period of a few years and was immediately followed by the creation of a Muslim state which provided protection of life and property, and exercized control over the movements of the nomad tribesmen. The Turkish conquest of Anatolia, on the other hand, extended over a long period of time, since wars, invasions and tribal migrations continued from the second half of the eleventh century until the consolidation of Ottoman rule over Anatolia in the fifteenth century. Unlike the Arabs, the Turks upset the existing Byzantine administration, replacing it with the Seljuk sultanate of Rum in one part of the conquered territory only, the rest being held by nomad tribesmen. The piecemeal conquest by the nomads wrought the destruction of rural life and the displacement of populations. It was in the areas held by the nomads that the process of Turkification was the most intensive.

In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, nomad Turks still formed

[33] The role of the nomads in the spread of Islam is a central theme in X. de Planhol, *Les fondements géographiques de l'histoire de L'Islam* (Paris, 1968).

[34] S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Hellenism*, pp. 143-194.

about sixteent percent of the population of Anatolia. At the same time, they accounted for only approximately three and a half percent of the population of the Balkans[35]. The Balkans had been conquered by the Ottoman army and were immediately ruled as a Muslim state. The migrations of the nomads were controlled by the Ottoman authorities and, here, penetration into the conquered society was limited. Islamization in the Balkans was more restricted and there was no significant process of Turkification.

Paradoxically, the creation of a Muslim state softened the impact of the nomads and curbed a more drastic process of religious and cultural change. The Arab conquerors of the Fertile Crescent, Egypt and the Maghrib were concentrated in garrison towns, the *amṣār,* and this allowed little opportunity for social interaction. However, the garrison towns soon developed into centres of trade and administration and attracted people from the countryside: servants, traders, artisans and officials. In the service of the Arabs, the newcomers to the towns adopted the Arab language and way of life, and converted to Islam. The garrison towns, which had begun as strongholds of Arab segregation, turned into centers of assimilation.[36]

This process, however, affected only a fraction of the local population, as conversions were individual and involved only those who chose to leave their own society and join the Muslim community in the towns. The demilitarization of the garrison towns progressed not only as a result of the influx of local civilian population, but also by the gradual removal of Arabs from the register of warriors (muqātila). Deprived of their pensions *('atā')* some of these Arabs settled in the villages among the local peasants. They were joined by Arab nomads whom the Umayyad authorities had directed to certain regions. It was in one of these areas of Arab settlement, in the Hawf region of the delta in Egypt, that conversion among the Copts progressed, and it was there also that the Copts' rebellions in the first half of the ninth century were the fiercest.[37] Even limited contacts with Arab settlers created upheavals which in many ways led to Islamization.

[35] S. Vryonis, "Religious Changes and Patterns in the Balkans, fourteenth to sixteenth centuries," in *Aspects of the Balkans: Continuity and Change,* ed. H. Birnbaum and S. Vryonis (The Hague, Paris, 1972), p. 172.

[36] R. Blachère, "Regards sur l'acculturation des Arabo-Musulmans jusque vers 40/661," *Arabica* 3 (1957), 254-5.

[37] I.M. Lapidus, "The Conversion of Egypt to Islam," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2

Khurasan provides another example of the consequences of social interaction between the Arabs and the conquered population. The Arab tribesmen, who had been sent to Khurasan by the Umayyads, were not settled in garrison towns but in villages around Merv, near and among the local population. As a result, there were more conversions —in particular among the common people— than in most, if not all, other lands conquered by the Arabs in that early period. Here the early contacts between the Arabs and the local population did not occur in the amsār, where the Arabs were a majority and which were *foci* of Arabization, but in the countryside, where the dispersed Arabs were a minority. Consequently, the Arab settlers were culturally absorbed by the local population, and by the middle of the eighth century, had adopted the local Iranian dialect. This twofold process of assimilation —Islamization of the Iranians and Iranization of the Arabs— precipitated the crisis which brought about the 'Abbāsid revolution.[38]

In Anatolia the Muslim conquest coincided with the influx and settlement of the nomadic tribes. In the Arab lands there were two phases of Arab penetration, which are most clearly seen in the Maghrib. Many of the Arab conquerors of the Maghrib in the seventh century returned to the East, others proceeded to Spain, and those who remained gathered in the garrison towns, mainly in Qayrawan. Only those Berbers who migrated to the towns or enlisted in the Muslim army came into direct contact with the Arabs. The tribal Berbers of the hinterland had been only nominally Islamized, and there was hardly any change in their way of life. The second phase began in the eleventh century with what is known as the Hilalian invasions, when Arab nomads in tribal formations entered the Maghrib. They brought about the Arabization of the steppes and the lowlands, partly by displacing the Berbers and partly by assimilating them. By adopting the Arab language and customs, the Berbers lost their ethnic uniqueness and became more deeply commited to Islam.[39]

(1972): 256-7; M. Shaban, *Islamic History* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 112-3, 146; M. Brett, "Conversion to Islam in Egypt and North Africa: The Early Centuries." (Paper discussed at the Seminar on Conversion to Islam, SOAS, University of London. 29 January 1973).

[38] M. Shaban, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution* (Cambridge, 1970), *passim;* M. Sharon, "The Advent of the 'Abbāsids," (Ph. D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1970), pp. 32-5 [in Hebrew].

[39] For different, sometimes conflicting, views of the role of the Hilalians in the

A similar process, though on a smaller scale (and which remained almost unnoticed, perhaps because there was no Syrian Ibn Khaldūn to magnify it!), occurred in Syria and Palestine. The Umayyad rulers successfully prevented the migrations of Arab nomads to Syria in order to avoid disturbing the administration and life of the local population. When security in Syria and Palestine weakened under the 'Abbāsids, the Bedouins penetrated the valleys, pressing the settled population into the mountains and towns. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, under the impact of the nomads, agricultural production declined, the settled population decreased, and the process of Arabization and Islamization intensified.[40]

The nomads, Arabs, Turks and Fulbe, were not themselves piously committed to Islam. They did not, therefore, contribute directly to Islamization in the religious sphere, but as conquerors and settlers under a sophisticated and urbane leadership, they accomplished the cultural change toward Arabization which, eventually, led to a deeper Islamization.

In the case of the Fulbe of West Africa, their contribution as fighters of the jihād movements was not followed by the same cultural and ethnic transformation caused by the Arabs and the Turks. The eighteenth century jihād in Futa Jallon (Guinea) did make those highlands the domain of the Fulbe, not by assimilating the former population but rather by displacing and subjugating it. In Adamawa (northern Cameroon), the Fulbe occupied the grasslands of the valleys, while the Kirdi and other local tribes lived in the less accessible parts. They accepted the political rule of the Fulbe, but were little affected by Islam. In northern Nigeria, the jihād had a more widespread influence over the inhabitants. In the Fulbe emirates, the Islamization of the Hausa, which had begun long before the jihād, was almost complete. But the Hausa culture still prevailed. Whereas the Fulbe pastoralists continued their transhumance, they retained a distinct Fulbe culture. Those Fulbe who became immersed in the political and religious

Maghrib, see H. R. Idris, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Zīrides* (Paris, 1962); J. Poncet, "Le mythe de la catastrophe hilalienne," *Annales: ESC 22* (1967), 1099-1120; M. Brett, "Ifrīqiya as a Market for Sharan Trade from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century," *Journal of African History* 10 (1968): 347-64; See also X. de Planhol, *Les fondements géographies, pp. 146-8.*

[40] M. Sharon, *Palestine under Muslim rule* (Jerusalem, 1973) [in Hebrew].

affairs of the emirates were, to a large extent, culturally assimilated by the Hausa.[41]

5. The cultural balance

Military power and political authority instills a sense of superiority in conquerors, whereas defeat and subjugation saps the self-confidence of the conquered. The psychological implications of this confrontation could lead members of the conquered society to identify with their rulers by assimilation. Yet human history has witnessed quite a few cases —that of the Germanic tribes is the most famous— in which victorious invaders had asserted their political dominion, but assimilated the superior culture and the more coherent religion of the defeated.

The cultural and material achievement of the Arab nomads of the desert did not reach the level of their neighbors' in Egypt, Syria and Iran. But even before their military and political success, the Arabs felt superior to their neighbors because of the inherent contempt of the nomad for the peasant and because of the Arabs' pride in their language, their tribe and their status. Such feelings were inculcated by doctrines of Islam which made the Arabs convinced that their religion was the most perfect. This sence of superiority was vindicated by their military victories and the creation of a mighty Arab Muslim empire.[42]

In the eastern provinces, Egypt, Syria and Iran, the local populations did not immediately accept the cultural and religious superiority of the conquerors. This was even more so because the Arabs retained Persian and Greek for some time as the official languages for administration. It was only towards the end of the seventh century and at the beginning of the eighth century that Arabic was introduced as the official language, and local officials had to learn Arabic in order to keep their government positions.

For reasons which will be discussed later in this paper, the Christians of Syria and Egypt maintained their religious and communal cohesion over a longer period. In Iran, on the other hand, the military defeat and the collapse of the empire created a temporary sense of frustration

[41] V. Azarya, "Traditional Aristocracy Facing Change: A Comparative Study of Fulbe Adjustment to Social Change in Guinea, Nigeria and Cameroon," (Ph. D. diss., the University of Chicago, 1973).

[42] G.E. von Grunebaum, "The First Expansion," pp. 67-70.

which opened the way for large scale conversions. Yet, by the end of the second century of the hijra, a cultural revival within Islam and on its fringes gave expression to Iranian national pride. The development of the Iranian language and of the national heritage was associated with a political reassertion which led to the rise of Iranian national dynasties. It was under these dynasties, between the middle of the ninth and the second half of the tenth centuries, that Iran became a predominantly Muslim country. The pace of Islamization increased owing to the elimination of resistance to political domination by alien Arabs which had been sustained by adherence to residual Zoroastrian traditions.[43]

Religious and political reactions against Arab domination in the Maghrib found expression in Ibadite and Shī'ite dissent and gave rise to Berber dynasties in the tenth century. But there was nothing similar to the Iranian *shu 'ūbiyya* among the Berbers, who seem to have resigned themselves to accepting their cultural and ethnic inferiority, as the Arabs maintained.

The Christian civilization of Spain was at a low point at the time of the Muslim conquest in the eighth century. Admiration for Arab culture led not only to conversion, but also to the adoption of Arabic and of some aspects of the Arabs' way to life by those who remained Christians. Arabized Christians, known as *Mozarabs,* were sometimes assimilated by conversion, but many upheld the distinction between the religious and the cultural spheres. Some or them were even religious fanatics and supported the Christian kingdom in its confrontation with the Muslims in Spain.[44]

The Turks, uncouth people of the steppes, relied on military prowess in their confrontation with the Christian population of Anatolia. The rural population came under the influence of the "babas" who preached an Islam impregnated with shamanist elements. This appealed to peasants whose folk religion was, in turn, imbued with pre-Christian beliefs and customs. The Turks had less to offer from their cultural heritage to the more sophisticated urban Christians. In the towns,

[43] R. Bulliet, "Conversion to Islam and the Emergence of a Muslim Society in Iran," in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. N. Levtzion (forthcoming).

[44] E. Lévi-Provençal, m *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmene*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1953), pp. 214-7; H. Pérès, "Les elements ethiques de l'Espagne musulmane et la langue arabe au 5e/IIe siècle," *Etudes d'orientalisme dediée à la mémoire de Lévi-Provençal*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1962), p. 726.

the cultural dimension of Muslim domination was provided by the Persian civilization, which prevailed in the court of the Seljuk sultans of Rum.[45] In India, under rulers of Turkish or Afghan origin, it was again the Persian culture that represented Islam in the confrontation with the high Hindu civilization.[46]

6. The preexistent religions in their encounter with Islam

The process of Islamization was greatly influenced by the organizational, material and spiritual position of the religious systems encountered by Islam. Among the more important factors was the relationship between the preexistent religious and political systems. The religious hierarchy suffered more from the Muslim conquest whenever it was tied to the defeated imperial institutions and depended on them.

The Zoroastrian religious establishment was an integral part of the Sasanid imperial structure, and the collapse of the empire almost destroyed the upper echelon of the religious hierarchy. Spiritual decadence and sterility in the Zoroastrian "church" during the last decades of the Sasanid Empire had already caused widespread disaffection among the upper clases of Iranian society. However, defection (mainly to the Nestorian church) was prevented by pressure from imperial authorities, who practically equated religious conformity with political loyalty. Following the Muslim conquest and the relaxation of these constraints, members of the upper classes converted to Nestorian Christianity. But when more opportunities arose for the integration of members of the upper classes into the Muslim society, the conversions to Islam increased.

Both the Zoroastrian church and Iranian society had been affected earlier at the top. In the villages the *mobads* maintained their influence and sustained the opposition to Arab domination and to Islam. Because of the ineffectiveness of Zoroastrian "orthodoxy", religious opposition to Islam developed neo-Zoroastrian syncretic and heretic movements. These movements contributed to the cultural

[45] O. Turan, "L'islamization dans la Turquie du moyen âge," *Studia Islamica* 10(1959): 139.

[46] Aziz Ahmad, "Hind [Islamic Culture]," in *EI*, vol. 3, p. 349.

and political revival which, as we have seen above, paved the way for Islamization.[47]

In Asia Minor the Muslim conquest had a devastating influence on the Greek Orthodox church because the latter had been closely integrated into the Byzantine Empire. Regions conquered by the Turks were cut off from the centre of the Church in Constantinople. Moreover, because of the protracted conflict between the Turks and the Byzantines, members of the Greek clergy were suspected of being agents for the enemy. Bishops could not reach their sees. The Christian population in Asia Minor remained without religious leadership while submitted to the political and fiscal pressures of the Muslim state and to the influence of Muslim men of religion.[48]

In explaining the successful expansion of the Arabs into the Fertile Crescent and Egypt, historians often refer to the religious schism of the Byzantine Empire, and to the tension betwen the official church and the Monophysitic sects which attracted a major part of the local population. Indeed, this rift explains why the local Christian communities, who had been persecuted by the official church and the Byzantine authorities, did not resist the Arab conquest and sometimes even welcomed it. But, on the other hand, the lack of any affinity between the Monophystic churches and the Byzantine Empire contributed to their survival under Muslim domination. These churches had already been accustomed to religious and political alienation from their rulers, and because the Muslim conquerors were more tolerant than the Byzantines, the Monophysite communities even revived after the Arab conquest and improved their cohesiveness. Such communities in Egypt and Syria fought the temptations to convert by exerting social and moral pressure on their members.

This, however, was true mainly in the first period after the Muslim conquest. Over the years the political domination of another religion had a deteriorating effect on the conquered religious community. Skepticism began to creep in and the intellectual resources waned. Many of the economic resources of the church had been appropriated during the conquest or gradually sapped by the rulers.

The church was unable to maintain its communal services, and its

[47] M.G. Morony, "The Effects of the Muslim Conquest on the Persian Population of Iraq," (forthcoming); M. Azizi, *La domination arabe et l'épanouisement du sentiment national en Iran* (Paris, 1938), pp. 289-90.

[48] S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Hellenism*, pp. 194-216, 288-350.

poorer members were tempted to seek aid from Muslim welfare institutions which were supported by the political authorities.

The intellectual and material impoverishment of the church bred corruption of the clergy, who also became dependent on the Muslim authorities. The community lost its cohesion, and its members did not have to overcome strong social constraints on the road to conversion. Such descriptions and criticism of the deterioration of the Christian communities to explain the defection of Christians to Islam appear in Christian sources, both local and European.[49] Different religious conditions in the regions of India during the encounter with Islam produced different patterns of Islamization. At the beginning of the eight century, when the Arabs invaded Sind, Buddhism retreated before the aggression of the Brahmans, who were supported by the Indians princes. It is likely that conversion to Islam was more common among the Buddhists than among the Hindus. By the eleventh century, when the Muslims established their domination over the principal regions of northern India, Hinduism had already been well implanted and could better resist the impact of Islam. Eastern Bengal, on the other hand, was in a stage of religious transformation at the time it was conquered by the Muslims. The majority of the population was still Buddhist, but it was pressed by the Brahmans. Muslim rulers and preachers seem to have found the population there disposed to embrace Islam.[50]

It is significant that in the lands of ancient civilizations and in their encounter with coherent religions —Christianity, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism— conquest and the imposition of Muslim rule preceded conversion to Islam. But in the more remote lands of Islam —in Africa and Indonesia— where Islam challenged syncretistic and latitudinarian religions, it was spread by the work of traders and clerics. There one has to deal not with conversion to Islam under Muslim political domination but with the penetration of Islam into the religion of the politically dominant society, which is another fascinating aspect in the comparative study of Islamization.

[49] T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, pp. 79, 166-187; C.R. Haines, *Christianity and Islam in Spain: 756-1031* (London, 1889), pp. 78-80; G. Wiet, *L'Egypte arabe* (Paris, 1937), pp. 41-2.

[50] I.H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent: 610-1947* (The Hague, 1962), pp. 39-40, 70, 75; S.M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India* (New York, 1963); K.S. Lal, *Growth*, pp. 179-81.

Islamization in the Indian subcontinent

S.A.A. Rizvi

Islam is essentially a proselytizing religion. From its early beginning in 610, the Prophet Muhammad (571-632) and those who embraced Islam did not hesitate to propagate the faith against fearful odds. However, it gained strength mainly at Medina, where the Prophet migrated in September 622. Eight years later, when he conquered Mecca, he was not only able to extirpate the idol-worshippers from that city, but actually found delegations of the Bedouin tribes swarming into Medina, bent on accepting Islam. The coincidence of the conquest and proselytization is so significant that the year 9 (630) is known, in history, as *sanat al-wufūd* ("the year of delegations"). Thus, from its very inception, the growing political superiotity of Islam was mainly responsible for its dissemination.

The Arab conquests of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Egypt and Tripoli between 635 and 642, and the subsequent establishment of Islamic governments, though not designed to proselytize those regions, did facilitate the process of Islamization. The subject nations were given the status of *dhimmīs* or *ahl aldhimma* ("people of the convenant or obligation") and allowed to follow their own canon laws. They were not called upon to perform any military duty and were therefore not entitled to any share in the *ghanīma* ("booty") of conquered lands. The dhimmis did not pay *zakāt* ("alms tax") but were required to pay *jizya,* or "poll tax", which existed even in the Sasanid and Roman Byzantine Empires.

Although Islamicization was a very complex phenomenon, it would seem that the early converts fell into the following basic categories:

1. Those religious minorities who had been persecuted under the Sasanid and Roma-Byzantine Empires.
2. Members of the governing classes who were taken captive and who embraced Islam in order to obtain their freedom, or to retain their positions of authority in the government of their conquerors, in whose ranks was a great dearth of civil administrators.

3. *Dihqāns* who, under the Sasanid empire, were hereditary village leaders and who, as government representatives, extracted taxes from the peasants on behalf of the imperial treasury.
4. Artisans and craftsmen dependent on the government for their living.
5. Sons and daughters of slavegirls brought up as Muslims.

The non-Arabs embracing Islam were placed under the tutelage of the Arabian Muslims, in whose house they learned Arabic and Islamic forms of prayers, as well as the rules of the *Sharī'a*. The genuine piety of a large number of these houses made the neo-converts steadfast in their faith, and they then became largely instrumental in disseminating Islam in the areas of their influence.

The pace of Islamic proselytization, however, was not so rapid in all conquered regions as in Egypt, Iraq and Iran. For example, in Transoxiana, under the weak governorship of the Umayyad (661-750) and 'Abbāsid Caliphs (749-1258), the local converts frequently apostatized. In the Indian subcontinent also, its roots were firmly established only in the wake of the conquests of different regions, although the Arab traders along the Malabar coast and in Ceylon had converted some local inhabitants even before the conquest of Sind by Muhammad bin Qāsim in 711-13. The king of Calicut, called "the Sāmurī" by the Arabs and later "the Zamorin" by the Portuguese, is known to have permitted the Arab and Iranian Muslim traders to convert the local inhabitants. Similarly, Arab merchants who had settled in the prosperous state of Gujarat continued to enjoy privileges under their Hindu rulers and might also have converted their local Hindu servants to Islam.

After the conquest of Daybul, Brahmanābād and Multān, Muḥammad bin Qāsim seems to have desecrated and partially destroyed the temples, erecting mosques in their place. Loss of life was quite heavy but after the restoration of peace, the Hindu and Buddhist subjects were given the status of dhimmīs and no further harm was done to their places of worship.[1] The high position of the Brahmans in Hindu society was given due recognition and the administration of revenues was left in the hands of indigenous

[1] Muḥammad 'Ali bin Ḥāmid bin Abua Bakr, *Chach-nāma* (Delhi, 1939), pp. 202, 208.

leaders.[2] However, Muḥammad bin Qāsim is known to have invited the tribal leaders to accept Islam.[3] Similar encouragement might have been given to others. The Umayyad Caliph, 'Umar II (717-20), also extended encouraging invitations to the dhimmīs of Sind, and Jay Sinha (the son of Rāja Dāhir, who had stubbornly fought against the Arab invaders) and some other chieftains embraced Islam. Jay Sinha later apostatized, but some of the other chiefs continued to follow their new faith.

The stray references to tribal groups in the *Chach-nāma* and other later chronicles do not specify exactly who became Muslims. It would seem, however, that some Buddhist and Brahman chiefs who were in touch with the Arab governments and who also acted as informers and fifth-columnists for the Arab conquerors may have accepted Islam in due course. Likewise, some Jāt and Rajput tribal leaders, who surrendered to Muḥammad bin Qāsim without much resistance, may have embraced the faith a few decades later.

The circumstances leading to the Islamicization of the Sumiras and Summas are not known. Their ancestors, who ruled in the Thatta regions, belonged to indigenous tribes. Of these, the Sumiras apparently embraced Islam in the early eighth century.[4] After a five-century rule, around 1351 the Sumiras were completely overthrown by the basically agriculturist Summas who, although divided, nevertheless managed to unite under able leaders to gain political power. Although not certain, it can be safely assumed that the leaders of the Summa tribes were also Islamicized in the eight century **A.D.** and that they disseminated Islam among their followers in rural areas, where the Arabs themselves rarely cared to settle.

The conquerors made Debal and Multān their frontier towns and founded a new town, Manṣūra, now extinct but which is said to have been situated near Shahdapur on an island in the Indus. The Arab conquerors built their mosques, schools and bazaars in these towns and lived there, assisted by the Buddhist and Brahman dhimmīs, who do not seem to have embraced Islam for several centuries. However, Hindu artisans and craftsmen who had been seized during the invasions and then liberated might have been induced to become

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 208-11.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 209.

[4] C. Defrémery et B.R. Sanguinetti, eds. and trans., *Voyages d'ibn Batoutah*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1855), p. 101.

Muslims and, like the indigenous agriculturists, embraced Islam much earlier than the dhimmī government officials.[5] The sons and daughters of the Arabs by their Hindu wives and concubines also went a long way to increasing the Muslim population.

The Sindī converts of the eighth and ninth centuries were Sunnis, but the establishment of Ismā'īlī rule in Multān and Sind between 977 and 985 saw the conversion of many of the Sunnis and Hindus to the Ismā'īlī faith. The Sumiras also became Ismā'īlīs and both Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna (998-1030) and later Mu'izz al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Sām (d. 1206), being orthodox Sunnis, ruthlessly slaughtered the Ismā'īlīs of the Multan region. The Sumiras and their successors the Summas, who ruled the eastern delta of Sind, managed to remain Ismā'īlīs until 1363 and only embraced the Sunni faith very slowly.

Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna was imbued with proselytizing zeal and converted Sukhpal, a grandson of the Hindūshāhiyya ruler Jaipal, appointing him governor of Ohind (Waihind near Peshawar), but he subsequently apostatized. During his Kashmir invasion of 1018, Sultan Maḥmūd is believed to have converted a Hindu raja and his ten thousand followers to Islam.[6]

It would seem that number of converts is grossly exaggerated and a large number of them ultimately reverted to their former faiths. The episode was totally forgotten and is not even mentioned in the famous ancient history of Kashmir, Kalhana's *Rājatarangiṇī*.

The unprovoked plundering raids on Hindu temples and the destruction of the Hindu rajas as far as Kanauj, Kalinjar and Somnath hardly served to stimulate Hindu interest in Islam. On the contrary, according to al-Birūnī, Maḥmūd's conquests, although spectacular and impressive, had only aroused in Hindus an "inveterate aversion towards all Muslims," and Hindu intellectuals had taken refuge in distant centers such as Kashmir and Benares, where the hands of the conquerors could not reach them.[7] The Brahman officers who formed a nucleus of administrators under the Arabs in Sind found that their services were no longer requiered, for an adequate supply of secretaries and *'āmils* ("revenue officials") was available from the Iranian and Central Asian provinces of the Ghaznavid Empire. The Ghaznavid

[5] M. Nazim, *The life and times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna* (Cambridge, 1931), p. 97.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

[7] E.C. Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, p. 22.

retained control of the regions from Lahore to Ghazna and were satisfied to receive fixed payment of tributes, partly in cash and partly in the form of elephants, preferably the latter. This too was paid only as long as the Ghaznavids were militarily superior.

The *dīwān,* or permanent civil establishment of Lahore, was developed by Sultan Maḥmūd, only towards the end of his reign.[8] The 'āmils, possibly of Iranian origin, appointed by the Sultan seem to have treated the local *thakkura* and *rāwatā,* or village chiefs, as the counterparts of the dihqān class, realizing revenue from the villages through them. However, like the dihqāns, thakkuras served as government agents, but did not show any interest in the Muslim urban life of Lahore. That city itself was torn, because of the scramble for authority, between the Turkic *ghāzīs* (*jihād* warriors) and the Iranian civil servants.

During his invasions, Maḥmūd seized many captives, whom he carried off to Ghazna to transform that city into a great center of palaces, mosques and seminaries, and to work in different *kārkhānas* or "royal manufacturing centers." It is possible that, finding the prospects of return to their homeland and families remote, the majority of the captives ultimately accepted Islam. Some of them might have done so as a result of the preaching of, and their association with, their pious masters, but generally speaking, conversion was due to political and economic reasons. The total number of captives taken to Ghazna by Maḥmūd after some seventeen expeditions may be gauged if one considers that on his return from his Kanauj expedition of 1018 alone, he brought back with him 53,000 slaves.[9]

Sultan Maḥmūd also recruited Indian troops in order to add a new element to his Muslim army of racially heterogeneous groups. In 1003, some of Maḥmūd's Indian troops are said to have massacred both Christians and Muslims of Zarang in Sistan.[10] Under Maḥmūd's successor, the influence of the Hindu troops of Ghazna increased considerably. These troops lived in separate quarters and were governed by their own commander, called the *sipahsālār-i Hinduyān.* Sevendhrāy, their commander during Muḥammad's reign, was more loyal to his Sultan than any of his Muslim commanders. Sultan Mas'ūd

[8] C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids* (Edinburgh, 1963), p. 76.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

[10] Malik al-Shu 'arā' Bahar, ed., *Tārīkh-i Sīstān,* pp. 354-55.

(1031-1041) replaced Aḥmad Inaltgin, his rebellious Turkic commander, with his Hindu slave, Tilak, who held the post of official translator. Tilak suppressed Inaltgin's rebellion and, joining the Sultan at Mervar-Rudh, presented him with not only the usual spoils of war but also fifty-five elephants which were taken as tribute from Indian princes.[11]

The severe defeats and setbacks suffered by Sultan Mas'ūd at the hands of his Iranian enemies took a heavy toll of the Rajput forces. In 1150-51, when Ghazna was reduced to ashes by the Ghūrīd 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain, the remnant of Hindu soldiers and Islamicized captives seem to have retired to Lahore and to other small towns of the Ghaznavid Panjab. This further increased the numbers of the Muslim population in the Panjab.

The Ghūrīd conquest of India in 1192 and the defeat of other centers of Rajput resistance saw the colonization of northern Indian towns by Muslims. Some Muslims were already living there, making their living as merchants and their attendants. Under the Delhi sultans, the Turkic generals began to live in towns close to their *iqṭā's*, but much of their time every year was spent either in Delhi, fighting against the rebellious chiefs of their own iqtā' or in the army of the Delhi sultans.[12] They had thus built houses for themselves in Delhi, which soon became over-populated with the members of the governing classes and their captured female slaves and children. The wives and fathers of the former had, of course, been slaughtered in wars or enslaved. The artisans and craftsmen captured in neighboring towns and villages were employed either as domestic servants or in their own professions in the kārkhānas. They also worked in departments catering to the needs of the imperial household or were employed in the royal factories to manufacture goods required for the Court. From the information available, it would seem that slaves working as domestic servants were converted earlier than artisans or those who worked in the royal factories. Some pious families granted manumission to their Islamicized slaves, who then earned their living as petty merchants, peddlers, shopkeepers and government officials. Their economic condition, however, was hardly enviable and offered

[11] Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 128.

[12] Revenue from lands of different size assigned to officers in lieu or their salary. The areas from which the iqṭā'-holders collected revenue diffeted according to their status and were transferable.

little incentive to the Hindus to embrace Islam. The rich Hindu merchants, bankers and money-lenders —privileged as the wealthy always have been— continued to practise their ancestral professions and openly performed their religious ceremonies, while paying jizya.[13]

Further sources of the Muslim population were the talented sons of slave-girls, who were brought up as Muslims. In addition, forts at strategic centers, where Muslim armies were garrisoned, seats of the iqṭā'-holders and other ancient towns where Muslims settled, followed the pattern of Delhi in developing the Muslim population.

In India, the subjugated village aristocracy —variously named *rā'īs*, *rānās*, or *rāwats*— who agreed to pay tribute or *kharāj* ("land revenue") and jizya did not, unlike the dihqāns of Iran, show any interest in Islam. Neither were they forced to embrace the religion. The sultans' chamberlains, such as Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325-51), were satisfied simply to greet them on their visit to the court with the cry, "May allah guide thee."[14]

The orthodox Muslim leaders considered the Brahmans the principal obstacle to Islamic proselytization and continually tried to force the sultans, without any tangible success, to convert them to Islam.[15] However, the sultans only seem to have forced their religion upon important tribal leaders representing a threat to the safety of the Muslim garrison. For example, by the middle of the thirteenth century, some Gakkhars in the Panjab and the Jāts and Meds of Sind embraced Islam, although a large number of them remained hostile to it for a long time By the sixteenth century, a considerable number of the Panjabi tribes, such as the Siāl, Sarhangwāhān, Bahliyān and Adhakāns had embraced Islam.[16] In the Assam region, Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī (d. 1206) is known to have converted the leader of the Kūch and Meg tribes.[17] We also know that Sultan Ghiyāth al-

[13] Żiyā' al-Dīn Baranī, *Tārīkh-i Fīrūz Shāhī* (Calcutta, 1860-62), p. 216. Hindi Translation in S.A.A. Rizvi, *Khalji Kālīn Bhārat* (Aligarh, 1955), pp. 26-27.

[14] Defrémery *Voyages d'ibn Batoutah*, vol. 3, p. 224.

[15] Baranī. tārikh-i Fīrūz Shāhī. pp. 41-43. Hindi translation in S.A.A. Rizvi, *Aji Turk Kālīn Bhārat* (Aligarh. 1956), pp. 155-56.

[16] The stories that the Jāts were persuaded to embrace Islam by a fellow Muslim prisoner in 1204-5 (*Tārīkh-i Alfī*. India Office Ms., F. 189a), and the Siāls Sarhangwāhān and Bahliyāns by the preachings of Bāba Farid Ganj-i Shakar (1175-1265) —see 'Ali Asghar Chistī, *Jawāhir-i Farīdī* (Lahore, 1884. pp. 396-97)— are sixteent century legends.

[17] Minhāj al-Dīn Abū 'Umar 'Uthmān bin Sirāj al-Dīn Muhammad Jūzjānī, *Tabaqat-i Nāṣirī*, (Calcutta, 1863-64)., pp. 152-53.

Dīn Balban (1266-1287) crushed the insurrection of the marauding Mēwātīs and the Hindu chiefs of Doab and Katihar.[18] Of these, the Mēwātī tribes and some of their leaders, known as Khānzādas, gradually embraced Islam. The Barwār or Barādū tribe, inhabiting the region between Gujarat and Malwa, famous for its reckless bravery, accepted Islam in Sultan 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī's reign (1296-1316).[19] As an added inducement, during Sultan Quṭb al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh's reign (1316-1320), Hindus who intented to embrace Islam were presented to him and received robes of honor and gold ornaments commensurate to their earlier status.[20]

Evidently the Islamization of important tribal leaders was considered a convenient tool for enforcing peace in the rebellious regions. It was not only Hindu tribes who were converted to Islam, however. The defeated Mongol tribes were also Islamicized, so that we even find a separate quarter established especially for them in Delhi during Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Khaljī's reign (1290-1296)[21] Sultan Muḥammad bin Tughluq introduced the policy of converting prominent Hindus in the Deccan, in order to consolidate his rule there. He forcibly Islamicized the surviving descendants of the rulers and nobles of Kampili in the Deccan. Harihar and Bukka, the founders of the independent kingdom of Vijayanagara, whom the Sultan Islamicized, were scions of this ruling dynasty. Sultan Muḥammad bin Tughluq, who wished to expel Maulan Shamsal-Dīn Yaḥyā, a prominent Chisthtiyya Sufi, from Delhi, urged him to leave for Kashmir and preach Islam in the temples there, but the Maulana died before the sultan's officials could implement his order.[22]

Sultan Fīrūz Tughluq (1351-1388) was the first Muslim sultan of Delhi to officially offer the remission of jizya as an inducement to converion. However, as the remission and certain other imperial favors had always been taken for granted in the past, Fīrūz's claims of subsequent mass conversions seem exaggerated.[23] Only a very small

[18] Baranī, *Tārīkh-i Fīrūz Shāhī*, pp. 55-59; Rizvi, *Ādi Turk Kālīn Bhārat*, pp. 162-66.

[19] Amīr Khusraw, *Tughluq-nāma* (Hyderabad (A.P.), 1933), p. 18; Rizvi, *Khalji Kālīn Bhārat*, p. 184.

[20] Defrémery, *Voyages d'ibn Batoutab*, vol. 3, pp. 197-98.

[21] Barani, *Tārīkh -i Fīrūz Shāhī*, p. 219; Rizvi, *Khalji Kālīn Bharat*, p. 28.

[22] Amīr Khwurd, *Siyar al-Auliyā* (Delhi, 1302), p. 228. Hindi translation in S.A.A. Rizvi, *Tughluq Kālīn Bhārat*, vol. 1 (Aligarh, 1956), p. 144.

[23] S.A. Rashid, ed., *Futūhāt-i Fīrūz Shāhī* (Aligarh, 1954), pp. 16-17. Hindi translation in S.A.A. Rizvi, *Tughluq Kālīn Bhārat*, vol. 2 (Aligarh, 1957), p. 337.

minority of Hindus had availed themselves of the opportunity extended to them before his official remission of jizya. Nevertheless, the effect of his proclamation upon Islamicization must have led to at least a slight increase in the Muslim population. On the other hand, Fīrūz also imposed jizya on Brahmans, who were hitherto exempt from its payment.[24] This was intended to placate those orthodox Muslims who had long been demanding the persecution of this high, priestly caste. Their intention of course was to deprive the Hindus of leadership.

From the end of the fourteenth century, the establishment of the rule of the independent provincial dynasties saw an acceleration in the process of conversion. This was due to government efforts in regions which, because of their remoteness from Delhi, were largely free from strong political pressures. Some of the ambitious rulers of these dynasties were generally at war with neighboring kingdoms, both Hindu and Muslim, in a bid to extend their own boundaries. They ruthlessly suppressed internal revolts and rebellious elements, mainly Hindus. Consequently, Hindu boy and girl slaves, and prisoners of war abounded in provincial capitals. The rulers' need to employ artisans and craftsmen in their kārkhānas, as well as the needs of the slaves to serve the families of the Muslim aristocracy, gave added impetus to the process of Islamicization.

Some Muslim sultans of the provincial dynasties were keen proselytizers. Of these, the most prominent were Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad (1418-1431), the converted son of Rāja Ganesh in Bengal, Sultan Sikandar But Shikan (1394-1416), and his Islamicized prime minister, Suha Bhatta in Kashmir.[25] In the early sixteenth century, Barbosa noted that daily, the heathens of East Bengal became "Moors to gain the favor of their rulers."[26] In Jaunpur, an officer of Sultan Ibrāhīm Sharqī (1402-1440) is known to have Islamicized a village in Rudaulī, near Lucknow.[27] In Gujarat, Sultan Aḥmad I (1411-1442) and Sultan Maḥmūd I Begṛā (1458-1511) are known to have made serious

[24] Shams al-Dīn ibn Sirāj al-Dīn 'Afīf, *Tārīkh-i Fīrūz Shāhī* (Calcutta, 1862), pp 250-51; Rizvi, *Tughluq Kālīn Bhārat*, vol. 2, pp. 150-51.

[25] Gulām Ḥusain Salim, *Riyāż al-salāṭīn* (Calcutta, 1890), pp. 115-16. Hindi translation in S.A.A. Rizvi, *Uttar Tīmūr Kālīn Bhārat*, vol. 2 (Aligarh, 1959), p. 554.

[26] M.L. Dames, trans. *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 2 (London, 1921), p. 148.

[27] Shaikh 'Abd al-Raḥmān Chishtī, *Mir'āt al-Asrār*, British Museum Ms., Rieu I, 359b, ff. 471-72.

efforts to convert Hindus to Islam. The avowed aim of Sultan Maḥmūd in invading Soratha was to spread Islam in the region. He was ultimately successful in converting its raja and gave him the title, Khān-i Jahān.[28]

The above examples of conversions, mentioned in passing by contemporary historians and foreign observers, tend to indicate that the State was an important instrument of Islamic proselytization, although forced conversion was confined only to the important tribal chiefs and the Rajput rajas. By abolishing the custom of enslavement of the families of war prisoners in 1562, Akbar (1556-1605) closed the most important avenue for conversions.[29] Nevertheless, Hindus were still being converted to Islam in the early part of his reign, the emperor himself participating in the proselytizing.[30] In the last quarter of his reign, however, the emperor did not only stop forcible conversiones, but even went to the extent of allowing the forcibly converted to return to their own faith.[31] In 1612, Jahangir (1605-1627) reconfirmed Akbar's decree against enforced conversions, by outlawing the conversion of unwilling Hindus to Islam.[32] In the early years of his reign, Shāhjahān (1627-1658), however, once again encouraged non-Muslims to embrace Islam, and Islamicized Hindu prisoners obtained favorable treatment.[33] Not that State patronage made any great increase in the number of converts. This is evident from the fact that, despite the reversal of Akbar's liberal policies by Aurangzīb (1658-1707), the introduction of new repressive and discriminatory laws —including the reimposition of the jizya abolished by Akbar— and measures encouraging prisoners of war to embrace Islam, very few conversions resulted. The total of all recorded cases, excluding the prisoners of war, embracing the religion is not known to have excceded 2000 souls.[34]

[28] Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad, *Tabaqāt-i Akbarī*, vol. 3 (Calcutta, 1935), pp. 146-47; Rizvi, *Uttar Tīmūr Kālīn Bhārat*, vol. 2, p. 216.

[29] Abu'l Faẓl, *Akbar-nāma*, vol. 2 (Calcutta, 1873-87), p. 159.

[30] Abu'l Faẓl, *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, vol. 3 (Lucknow, 1892), p. 181; Akbar's sayings, no. 181.

[31] 'Abd al-Qādir Badā'ūnī, *Muntkhab al-tawārīkh*, vol. 2 (Calcutta, 1864-9), pp. 391-92.

[32] *Tuzuk-i Jahangīrī* (Ghazipur and Aligarh, 1863-4), p. 100

[33] Muḥammad Ṣadiq Hamadānī, *Tabaqāt-i Shāhjahānī*, British Museum Ms., Rieu III, 1009b, F. 361b.

[34] Sri Rama Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, 2nd. ed. (London 1962), pp. 165-69

In the eighteenth century, the decline and disintegration of the Mughal Empire made proselytization through political pressure exceedingly difficult in the Delhi region. The emergence of the new Muslim states in Murshidābād, Hyderabad, Awadh, Rohilkhand, Farrukhābād, Arcot and Mysore, however, made the Hindus of those regions liable to conversion through such pressures. Many Muslim *zamīndārs* who vied with Hindus for power or prestige in their own regions also made conversions in order to secure more dependable support for themselves. During that century we find some leading orthodox religious leaders, such as Shāh Wali Allāh, advising the rulers that they should forbid members of other faiths to perform their own rites publicly. Furthermore, the infidels should not be treated on an equal footing with Muslims in such matters as the *qiṣāṣ* ("law of retaliation"), *diyat* ("compensation for manslaughter"), marriage, and participation in the working of government. Such discriminatory laws, the Shāh believed, might prompt infidels to embrace Islam.[35]

Professor Muhammad Habib has suggested that "the acceptance of Islam by the city-workers was a decision of local professional groups, and that in making their decisions they were naturally more concerned with mundane affairs and their position in the social order than with abstract theological truths, which they had been declared incapable of understanding or even hearing."[36] He rightly notes the presence of large numbers of Muslim workers of purely Indian origin in every city and town, but their conversion cannot be attributed to caste decisions.[37] A more plausible hypothesis is that they belonged to that class of war prisoners sold in town and later converted by their masters.

The demand for slaves working as domestic servants greatly increased after the influx of Muslim families into India in the third quarter of the thirteenth century. The immingrants settled in small

[35] Wali, Allāh. *Hujjat Allāh al-bā ligha*, vol. 1 (Karāchī, n.d.) pp. 257-58.

[36] M. Habīb, "Introduction" in *History of India*. Elliot and Dowson, vol. 2 (Aligarh, 1952), p. 59.

[37] *Ibid.* p. 56. He says that "Elephant drivers [*mahauts*] and burchers adopted the new faith almost to a man." Since Muslims could not have kept Hindu butchers in their service, they would have forced them to embrace Islam. It is doubtful, however, that elephant drivers would have felt any need to change their religion. Furthermore, they are known to have stuck to their faith even under the Ghaznavids. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 117; M. Nazim. *The Life and Times of Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna* (Cambridge, 1931), p. 139.

towns from the Panjab to Bihar, converting the slaves they bought or seized in local raids on the rebellious Hindu chiefs.

Another important development contributing to the process of Islamicization was the growing interest of the iqṭā'-holders in the villages whose revenue was assigned to them as their salaries. These were transferable, but after the death of Sultan Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish (1211-1236), a considerable number of the *iqṭā'* -holders, particularly those who belonged to the Sultan's personal troops (*qalb*), turned the territories, whose revenue was assigned to them on condition of service, into hereditary estates. Sultan Balban (1266-1287) intented to deprive them of their possessions, but dropped the scheme for emotional considerations.[38] 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī, who made revenue reforms of far-reaching importance, seems to have imposed rules upon the descendants of the hereditary *iqṭā'* -holders, which he had framed for the Hindu chiefs, and did not deprive them of their estates. The revenue of villages given as *madad-i ma'āsh* to Muslim holy men, *Saiyids*, Sufis and other deserving people was generally made for the lifetime of the recipients, but they also tended to become hereditary.[39] In the reign of Sultan Fīrūz Tughluq, a large number of iqṭā '-holders' assignments were not transferred and came to be treated as hereditary property.[40] This trend increased during the anarchy prevailing after Fīrūz's death and, from the reign of Sikandar Lodī (1489-1523), the Afghan iqṭā'-holders came to have a hereditary interest in their land. Akbar's revenue reforms turned them into Muslim zamīndārs. The following are the statistics of those zamīndārs outlined in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, which was finished in 1597-98.

[38] Barani, *Tārīkh-i Fīrūz Shāhī*, pp. 61-64; Rizvi, *Ādi Turk Kālīn Bhārat*, pp. 167-69.

[39] The revenue grant for a specified area, which was paid to holy men, was known as the *madad-i ma'āsh*. A considerable area of land granted as madad-i ma'āsh usually lay fallow. Under Akbar, generally half of the total area of *madad-i ma'āsh* used to be cultivable waste. The Muslims developed this land with the help of the landless Hindu laborers or tribes. Those who assisted in the cultivation of the land were not forced to change their religion.

[40] 'Afif, *Tārīkh-i Fīrūz Shāhī*, pp. 94, 359-60; Rizvi, *Tughluq Kālīn Bhārat*, vol. 2, pp. 64, 143.

Zamīndārs of different racial and ethnic groups described as castes in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*	Maḥāls[41]	Sarkārs[42]
Afghāns	39	18
Lodīs (Afghāns)	3	3
Lohānīs (Afghāns)	2	2
Tarīn (Afghāns)	1	2
'Īsakhel (Afghāns)	1	1
Niyāzī (Afghāns)	1	1
Dalzāk (Afghāns)	1	1
Farmulī (Afghāns)	1	1
Qiyām-khānī (Afghāns)	3	2
Afghān-i Miyānā	1	1
Khaljī	3	3
Shaikhzādas	15	12
Shaikhs	1	1
Chishtīs	1	1
Ṣiddīqī	4	4
Fārūqī	1	1
'Abbāsī	1	1
Qurayshī	1	1
Saiyids	20	12
Bukhārī (Saiyids)	1	1
Raḥatu 'llahī	5	4
Anṣārī	5	5
Malikzāda	3	3
Khānzādas of Mewāt	18	2
Khānzāda	8	2
Meos (both Hindus and Muslims)	5	1
Musalmāns (general)	11	9
Baloch	4	3
Khokkars (possibly Muslim)	1	1
Jinjúha	1	1
Kharal	2	1

[41] *Maḥāls* or *parganas* were composed of a group of villages, for the convenience of the revenue administration.

[42] Each *ṣūba* ("province") was divided into a number of *Sarkār*, and consisted of several parganas. In 1597 Akbar's empire comprised 105 sarkārs and 2737 *maḥāls* or parganas.

Chauhāns, Muslim (newly converted to Islam)	1	1
Bais (newly converted to Islam)	1	1
Ranghar (possibly Muslims)	2	2
Turkman	3	3

Muslim interest in the zamīndārī and the number of Muslim *madad-i ma'āsh* holders greatly increased in the seventeenth century, and the Muslim populations in new *parganas* and towns also increased. This meant a gradual increase of Muslim artisans and craftsmen along with a small population of Muslim soldiers and officials in all urban centers. Although some of them might have belonged to the immigrants from Iran or Central Asia, a large number were newly converted. In the villages newly founded by the Shaikhzādas, Saiyids and Afghans, attempts were made to encourage the indigenous tribal groups to lead a settled life, but they were not generally converted. For example, Shaikh Farīd al-Dīn bin Shaikh Bāyazid (d. 1579) encouraged Jāt tribes to settle down in Shaikhupura (near Delhi), which he founded, and persuaded them to abandon highway robbery, but he did not convert them to Islam.[43] In all new villages founded by the Muslims, which are clearly identifiable by their Muslim names, little effort was made to convert the Hindu cultivators or tribal groups. Likewise, the Muslim holy men and scholars, who enjoyed considerable *suyūrghāl* grants in the *maḥāls* of the Hindu *zamīndārs*, which outnumbered those under the Muslim zamīndārs, left the cultivators who worked their fields alone.[44] This was due not to any liberal motives on the part of the holy men and others, but to the fact that, like their livestock, the cultivators were indispensable to the rural economy and in the event of any undue pressure, they were always prepared to migrate from one region to another. Thus, Shāh Walī Allāh divided the entire population under a Muslim ruler into three categories: 1) those obedient to the ruler's faith, both inwardly and outwardly; 2) those who had no other choice but to obey formally; 3) infidels employed as cultivators, whom the ruler kept subdued like quadrupeds and who worked the fields or

[43] *'Alā'* al-Dīn Muhammad Chishtī Barnāwī, *Chishtiyya-i bihishtiyya*, Urdu summary in the *Oriental College Magazine* (August, 1927), pp. 41-58.

[44] An Iranian and Central Asian equivalent of the term *madad-i ma'āsh*.

carried heavy loads.[45] The majority of Muslims, however, would not generally have identified the Hindu cultivators with beasts of burden or livestock and, in their own economic interest, did not interfere with their religious beliefs and social customs.

The rulers employed preachers to deliver sermons to the armies and also to important towns. The main aim of the preachers in the army was to boost the morale of the Muslim soldiers and to inculcate piety among the Muslims in towns. Nevertheless, their sermons would also have acquainted prisoners of war in military camps and towns with Islam. There had always been independent preachers, such as the Qaramatian Nūr Turk of the thirteenth century, whose sermons deeply moved all who heard.[46] According to Shāh Walī Allāh, domination by the sword did not remove doubts from the minds of the converts, who were thus likely to revert to their original infidelity. It was therefore the primary duty of the ruler to convince the converts through arguments or preaching that other religions did not merit any attention, for they were neither preached by any infallible authority nor were they conductive to social well-being.[47]

We do not have any knowledge of the results of the preaching, but it would seem that it alone was not responsible for proselytization. Shaikh Niẓam al-Dīn Auliyā' (1238-1325), a leading Sufi of the Chishitiyya order, believed that preaching did not change the mind of the unbelievers. It was only the company of pious men which blessed people with Islam. The Shaikh did not consider himself one of those pious men. Conversely, he deeply admired the devotion of the Brahmans to their own faith and for their selflessness and asceticism.[48] Modern scholars, however, toeing the line expressed by T.W. Arnold in the *Preaching of Islam,* assert that Sufis were great preachers and proselytizers. This is certainly not true of the Chishtiyya and Suhrawardiyya Sufis of the thirteenth century. The only known exception was Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī, an eminent Suhrawardiyya Sufi of the period who converted a robber of Katihar to Islam and is also said to have converted a large number of infidels of Devatalla (Deva Mahal) near Pandua in northern Bengal.[49] In the fourteenth

[45] Allāh, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bā'ligha*, vol. 1, p. 257.

[46] Amīr Hasan Sijzi, *Fawā'id al-fu'ād* (Bulandshahr, 1855-56), pp. 212-13.

[47] Allāh, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, vol. 1, p. 258.

[48] Sijzi, *Fawā'id al-fu'ād*, pp. 196, 68.

[49] Jāmāli, *Siyar al-'ārifīn* (Delhi, 1893), p. 171.

century, the arrival of Shaikh Jalāl at Sylhet in Bengal introduced the Turkestani militant proselytizing techniques into that state. In Turkistan many Sufis are known to have continually waged war against the infidel Turks in order to convert them to Islam.[50] Shaikh Jalāl's spiritual guide, Khwaja Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 1166), is said to have ordered his seven hundred disciplines to accompany the Shaikh on his evangelical mission.[51] The booty gained by the warriors enabled them to live luxuriously. Shaikh Jalāl would leave his most eminent disciples to propagate the faith in the regions he is said to have conquered.[52] Although not corroborated by Indian historians, it is not unlikely that the Shaikh and his disciplines plundered Hindu villages en route to Bengal and converted some Hindus to Islam.

Shaikh Jalāl's enterprising selection of Sylhet, for his spiritual activities, is matched by Shaikh Badr al-Dīn or Pīr Badr-i 'Ālam's (d. 1440) choice of Chittagong, for his evangelical activity. Retaining his superiority as a magical figure with power over rivers and as the patron saint of sailors and mariners in East Bengal, Pīr Badr is associated with the great mystical figure or Khwāja Khiḍr. Both came to be worshipped in a joint ceremony, held at a village pond or a nearby river, in which a little grass raft, carrying a lighted lamp, was launched.[53]

In the fifteenth century, Shāh 'Abd Allāh Shaṭṭarī (d. 1485) marched in military fashion from Central Asia to Bengal, accompanied by a band of disciples dressed as soldiers.[54] The local Shaṭṭāriyya *khānqāhs*, which he established from Bengal to Malwa, and the later ones, founded by his disciplines as far away as Gujarat, were quite unlike the early Chishtiyya centres in India. The fame of the Shaṭṭāriyyas, who were said to perform miracles and supernatural feats, helped them to greatly impress the Hindus and thereby to convert several disciples to Islam. It would seem that in Bengal they

[50] For example, Shaikh Abū Bakr Qaffāl (d. 1026-27) pursued the following routine: In the first year, he fought against the infidels in Turkistān. In the second year, he would go on pilgrimage, while spending the third year disseminating knowledge. Husain al-Wā'iz al-Kāshifī, *Rashahat 'ayn al-ḥayāt* (Lucknow, 1912), p. 206.

[51] Köprülüzade Mehmed Fuad, *Türk edebiyatenda ilk mutasavvifiar* [The first Mystics in Turkish Literature], pt. 1, (Istanbul, 1919); summarized by L. Bouvat in *Revue du monde musulman* (Paris), 43 (1921), pp. 236-82.

[52] Ghawthī Shaṭṭārī, *Gulzār-i abrār*, Manchester Ms., ff. 75a-b.

[53] S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, (Delhi, 1977), pp. 316-18.

[54] Shaṭṭari, *Gulzār-i abrār*, ff. 100b-103b.

reinforced the activities of the descendants of Shaikh Jalāl and Pīr Badr-i 'Ālam. Not only did they convert many animists, Buddhists and Hindus in Bengal, but their activities extended from there to Sumatra and Java, transforming those regions into important Shaṭṭāriyya centers.

Saiyid Jalāl al-Dīn Bukharī, known as Makhdūm Jahāniyān (1308-1384), and his brother Rājū Qattāl, the eminent Suhrawardiyyas, were keen evangelists. A Suhrawardiyya Sufi, Saiyid Sharaf al-Dīn (d. 1326), whom Kashmiris remember as "Bulbul Shāh," converted Rinchana (d. 1323), the last Buddhist ruler of Kashmir, to Islam. Some Suhrawardiyya followers of Makhdūm Jahāniyān who migrated to Srinagar are also known to have been imbued with proselytizing zeal, and the rulers of the Muslim Shāh Mīr dynasty (1339-1561) gave them royal patronage. Shaikh Ḥamza Makhdūm (1494-1576), the most prominent Suhrawardiyya Sufi of Kashmir, was principally concerned with converting the Shī'īs to Sunnism, but would not have hesitated to convert the Hindus likewise. Shaikh Ḥamza's followers were puritanically minded Sunnis and followed the evangelical traditions of the founder of their Sufi branch in Kashmir.

In Mīr Saiyid 'Ali Hamadānī (1314-1385) were combined the evangelical traditions of both Khwaja Aḥmad Yasewī and Shaikh 'Alā al-Daula Simnānī (1261-1336). Accompanied by a band of followers, Mīr reached Kashmir in about 1381 and left the valley three years later, dying on his return journey in 1385. He and his followers traveled widely throughout the valley, demolishing temples and converting Hindus to Islam. After the departure of the Mīr, a number of his followers stayed behind in Kashmir, ransacking Hindu temples in order to enrich themselves and their followers.

The arrival of Saiyid 'Alī's son Mīr Muḥammad, in 1393, reinvigorated the evangelical spirit of the earlier Irani settlers. Sultan Sikandar (1394-1416) became a discipline of the young migrant and constructed a khānqāh on the site where his father had first built a prayer platform. One of the Sultan's powerful and influential Brahman nobles, Suhā Bhatta, became Mīr Muḥammad's discipline, adopted Saif al-Dīn as his Muslim name, and gave his daughter in marriage to his young teacher.

Under the influence of Mīr and Suhā, Sultan Sikandar demolished ancient temples in Pompur, Vijabror, Martand, Anantnāg, Sopur and Baramula. Many puritanical and discriminatory laws were implemented and jizya was introduced for the first time in Kashmir.

The persecution of Brahmans, their exclusion from the top spheres of government, and their replacement by Irani migrants, accelerated the process of conversion of the Brahman élite, who were unwilling to abandon the superior positions they had hitherto held in the administration. Muslim historians enthusiastically describe how the influence of Mīr Saiyid 'Alī and Mīr Muḥammad rooted out infidelity in Kashmir. Before long, however, Sultan Sikandar tired of his bigoted policy and, according to the Brahman historian Jonaraja, "fixed with some difficulty a limit to the advance of the great sea of the Yavanas [Muslims]" and abolished **turuskhadanda** (jizya).[55] This change in state policy seems to have so disappointed Mīr Muḥammad that, after a stay of twelve years he, like his father before him, left Kashmir.

The khānqāh of the leading Naqshbandiyya, Khwaja Khāwand Maḥmūd Naqshband (1557-1642), who seems to have reached the valley shortly after Akbar's conquest of Kashmir in 1586, was also an important center of Muslim conversions and, from there, the Naqshbandiyya disciples were sent by the Khwaja as far away as Laddakh on their evangelical missions.[56]

Kashmir also saw the development of an important Sufi movement started by Shaikh Nūr al-Dīn Rishī (1378-1439). In subsequent centuries it became very popular in the valley. Its *raison d'être* was service to mankind and incessant war against the lower self. Its members lived in harmony and peace with their Hindu countrymen and were not interested in converting them to Islam, but many Hindus, influenced by the Rishī ideologies, seem to have accepted Islam in due course.

In the middle of the fifteenth century, the introduction of the Qādiriyya order, first in the Deccan and later in Sindh, the Panjab and other parts of the country, gave a further impetus to Muslim proselytizing activities. Mulla 'Abd al-Qādir Badā'ūnī, an ardent enemy of Akbar's political and religious policies, invites us to believe that Shaikh Dāwud, a famous Qādiriyya Sufi (d. 1574-75), whom he visited in his khānqāh in 1573-74 at Shergarh near Lahore, used to convert fifty to a hundred Hindus daily.[57] This number is grossly exa-

[55] J.C.Dutta, trans., *Kings of Kashmir* [Rājataraṅgiṇī] by Jonarāja (Calcutta, 1898, p.112

[56] Muhammad Mu'īn al-Dīn, *Mir'at-i Ṭaiyiba*, Riza Library Rampur Ms., p. 165.

[57] 'Abd al-Qadir Badā'ūnī, *Muntakhab al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 3 (Calcutta, 1864-69), p. 34.

ggerated, for during his evangelical career of about forty years, he would thus have converted the whole of the Panjab to Islam. However, it does show that the Qādiriyyas were active evangelists. So much so that Dārā Shukoh's teacher, Mullā Shāh (1584-1661), is also known to have converted a number of Hindus to Islam.[58]

In the seventeenth century, the Rashidīyya khānqāhs of the Qādiriyyas between Jaunpur and Bihar seem to have Islamicized many Hindus. In Bengal, the Qādiriyya khānqāh of Shaikh Ni'mat Allāh Qādirī and his successors, which had first Prince Shāh Shujā' and later Aurangzīb as its patron, seems to have both converted Hindus and strengthened orthodoxy among the syncretic Shaṭṭāriyyas, Madāriyyas, and Pīr Badr-i 'Ālam's followers in Bengal.

The great Naqshbandiyya, Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī (1564-1624), known as the *mujaddid* ("renewer") of the second milennium of Islam, would hardly have attracted any Hindus to his puritanical mission. Nevertheless, Shaikh Badr al-Dīn Sirhindī, a disciple of the Mujaddid, describing the miracles of his spiritual guide, says that despite the comparative weakness of Islam at the time, and the predominance of infidelity, thousands of *kāfirs* accepted Islam under the Mujaddid.[59] Although we may not accept the Shaikh's claims as being strictly true, there can be no doubt that the Mujaddid's disciples and his descendants would not have hesitated to offer hopes of salvation and other less significant favors in this world and the hereafter in the event of their conversion to Islam. Shah Walī Allāh, who had obtained initiation into the Naqsbandiyya order, converted some Hindus to Islam, and his son, Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz (1746-1824), also claimed to have Islamicize hundreds of them.[60]

The spurious *malfūẓāt* ("collection of discourses") of the Chishtiyyas, written in the fourteenth century, tend to indicate that even the thirteenth-century Chishtiyyas converted Hindus to Islam. Although the authentic malfūẓāts and the known details of the lives of thirteenth century Chishtiyyas go against such claims, the popular image of even early Chisthtiyyas was one of great evangelists. However, we learn from Saiyid Muḥammad Gīsū Daraz (1321-1422) that he studied Sanskrit in order to indulge in religious polemics with Brahmans. He declared that many of the Brahmans who came to

[58] Dāra Shukoh, *Sakīnat al-auliyā'* (Tehran, n.d.), p. 160.

[59] Shaikh Badr al-Dīn Sirhindī, *Hazat al-quds* (Lahore, 1971), p. 156.

[60] Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz, *Malfuzat-i Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz* (Meerut, 1896-97), p. 22.

discuss with him the superiotity of their faith sustained defeat, but did not accept Islam, despite the solemn vow taken by both sides that the defeated would embrace the faith of the victor.[61] Thus, the Saiyid does not seem to have succeeded in converting any Brahmans. This is not to say that there were no Hindus converted to Islam by other lesser known Chishtiyyas. What is remarkable is the fact that, until the eighteenth century, the leading Chishtiyyas are not known to have taken any interest in converting Hindus to Islam, although they were deeply interested in the mystical philosophy and practices of the Hindus. However, the famous Shāh Kalīm Allāh Jahānabādī (1650-1729) did encourage his discipline, Shaikh Niẓām al-Dīn (d. 1730) to convert Hindus to Islam, writing to him that he should live peacefully with both Hindus and Muslims, teaching the Hindus *dhikr* ("repetitive invocation of God's name"), without waiting for their conversion. The new converts were advised to hide their new faith initially and to reveal it only gradually, so that in the event of sudden death relatives would not cremate them.[62] Shaikh Niẓām al-Dīn's son, Shāh Fakhr al-Dīn (1714-1785) also urged his disciples that *dhikr* should not be postponed until after Islamicization, as the names themselves were dynamic and attracted people to Allah. Naturally the Chishtiyya technique of proselytization converted only a few of the Hindu élite whose Persian education had already aroused in them an interest in Islam.

The Sufi miracles are believed to have been a principal factor contributing to Islamicization. The anecdotes related in the legendary Sufi works of Sufi-yogi encounters, in which the Sufis are invariably depicted as victorious, conclude with the conversion of the yogi, along with his entire band of followers and devotees. It was believed that the yogi's perfection of flying through the air, which is described in legends, was obtained through physical exercises, while the Sufis' superiority was based on Divine grace.[63] According to the legends, the Sufi miracles converted Ḥindus to Islam in large numbers. However, the known details of the life and teachings of Sufis, such as Khwaja Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī (d. 1236), who are believed to have performed such feats do not corroborate this.

The blessings said to emanate from the tombs of famous Sufis

[61] *Jawāmi' al-kilam*, British Museum Ms., ff. 87a-90a.

[62] *Maktūbāt-i Kalīmī* (Delhi, 1897-98), pp. 11-12, 25-26.

[63] Sijzi, *Fawā'id al fu'ād*, pp. 57-58.

attracted even larger groups of common Muslims and Hindus than did the khānqāhs of mystics, which were élite organizations in the main. According to Jamālī (d. 1536), many leading infidels of Ajmer regions were converted to Islam through blessings allegedly received from the tomb of Khwaja Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī. Jamālī found large numbers of Hindus visiting and prostrating themselves before the Khwaja's tomb.[64] It would seem that Hindus did not hesitate to invoke the alleged mystical and supernatural powers of the Sufis for the treatment of incurable diseases and for ridding their homes and villages of demons and devils. Such problems were the concern of all khānqāhs and amulets were in great demand both by the Muslims and Hindus. Some Sufis may well have given amulets to the Hindus, extracting from them, in return a vow to become Muslims. Some graves of Muslims killed in the wars against the Hindus came to be worshiped both by the Muslims and Hindus, mainly in villages considered to be endowed with supernatural powers. A large number of fictitious, empty graves also became the object of worship and caused occasional conversion of the Hindus to Islam.

A final word. While not forgetting the complexity of issues surrounding the Islamicization of the individual, the evidence marshaled above suggests that political pressures and economic incentives largely influenced the process of proselytization. Even the Sufis, who are known to have converted a considerable number of Hindus, depended on government assistance for the success of their efforts. The early Delhi sultans, who after the middle thirteenth century were unable to recruit Muslim soldiers due to the Mongol domination of the west of India, naturally considered the Islamicization of warrior tribes both militarily and politically advantageous. The Islamicization of the tribes of West Panjab was much easier than that of the villagers of the Gangetic *doab* for, unlike the latter, the Panjabi tribes were not under the religious control of the Brahmanical class. The constant pressure of the orthodox Muslims to annihilate the Brahmans was designed to deprive the Hindu masss of leaders. The individual efforts of some Muslim preachers and Sufis were directed towards converting Brahmans or the local rajas, and not the untouchables or outcastes, as some modern scholars invite us to believe. Some artisans and craftsmen, whom the Muslims converted for the development of their own urban life, did achieve higher social status because of their merits,

[64] Jamālī, *Siyar al-'ārifīn*, p. 13.

but a large number of them still led a miserably neglected life. There was no interference in the lives of Hindu cultivators and laborers, upon whom depended the agricultural revenue throughout northern India. Only the masses of eastern Bengal succumbed, without much resistance, to political pressures, to the militant evangelism of Shaikh Jalāl of Sylhet, and to the magical and syncretic teachings of the Qalandars, the followers of Pīr Badr-i 'Ālam, the Shaṭṭāriyyas, Madāriyas, and other unorthodox Sufis.

Modes of Islamization in Southeast Asia

A.H. Johns

The distribution of Islam in the two modern states of Malaysia and Indonesia, setting the territories they encompass apart from the predominantly Buddhist regions of continental Southeast Asia, appears at first sight a tidy arrangement. It is only with a study of the racial mix of Islam in these two states —particularly in Malaysia— and the very different levels of intensity with which the peoples of various ethnic regions of Indonesia perceive themselves to be Muslims, that it becomes evident that this supperficial neatness of distribution, and the homogenized figures processed by the statisticians conceal a baffling complexity that it will take many decades of research to unravel.

One of the reasons for this is that the lines of development in religious communities which under colonial rule managed to maintain themselves, albeit with difficulty and on a reduced scale, run up against a very different kind of challenge once sovereignty has been transferred to a new state. Pre-modern institutions, which were in the interests of the colonial power to leave well alone, are not able to hope for the same measure of immunity from a national government bent on a policy of modernization.

This dimension of religious change is a major field of study in its own right; it occurs because the central authority, which in the traditional model state only rarely has direct involvement with the various networks of functioning units —the shifting, kaleidoscopic mosaic of social institutions— begins to exercise a central normalizing authority in a manner characteristic of a modern technological administration.

It is important, then, to trace lines of development of Islam in this region, and indeed elsewhere, to follow the course of their evolution and responses to challenge over the centuries, before a new political structure breaks the traditional model and imposes a normative

modernizing ideology, thus obscuring the discreteness and variety of the processes of the past.

The resulting new structure may be an Islamic state, such as Pakistan, or as in our region, it may be a secular state, such as Indonesia (with numerous discrete Muslim communities), which has a religious but non-confessional state ideology in which Muslims are expected to participate with a central Ministry of Religion. This ministry, in theory, serves all religions granted official status, but, in practice, has a modernizing, normalizing role vis-à-vis the Muslim communities. To better understand the difference between the traditional and the modern state, one can perhaps compare it to the difference between the rather loosely structured Latin Church of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, and the strongly normative character of the papacy as it developed during the Counter-Reformation.

The Muslim community in what is now Indonesia, then, is the heir to a variety of modalities by which Islam achieved a presence at particular points in Southeast Asia. In some, it remained simply a presence, in others, it disappeared and, in still others, it developed as the opportunities of time and place allowed.

When the term *Southeast Asia* first became popular, it was felt that it served to rediscover an area of the world which, if not lost, had at least been overshadowed by the Indian sub-continent, on the one hand, and China, on the other. Certainly it met a need. But it brought with it the same danger implicit even in the use of the term Asia. It suggests both a sufficient homogeneity in the region itself and sufficient elements in common between all the extra-territorial influences which generated a response there to make possible a broad series of useful generalizations. It may, in retrospect, be safer to limit these generalizations to the facts of geography. For even the common experience of colonialism in the region has been varied and complex.

The types of colonial rule of Britain, France and Holland differed widely as a result of the national differences between the three powers. The impact of their rule and the kind of rule that they imposed on different regions varied considerably. In the former Dutch Empire, the contrast between the administrative terms *Java* and *the outer islands* is significant and revealing.

The pressure to formulate general principles resulting from political (the Dutch East Indies) or geographical units (Southeast Asia) has perhaps been responsible for the way in which questions relating to

the arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia have been formulated. The search for *an* origin has long been a basic concern; thus, questions have been of the type: Did Islam come from Arabia, Egypt, Gujert, or from the Coromandel coast?

In fact, Drewes' *obiter dicta* on the problem of *the* origin of Islam is: "Resumption of the archaelogical research in North Sumatra and painstaking study of Islam in South India —for which a thorough knowledge of Tamil is indispensable —appear to be primary requirements."[1]

Just as it seemed that this was a question admitting only one answer, so it seemed that there was only one agent of Islamization: the merchants. In 1961 I attempted to refine this view by suggesting a relationship between the merchants and the Sufi confraternities.[2]

Plainly, certain aspects of Sufism could have been appealing to the courts of the Hinduized kingdoms, and yet others might have been attractive to the peasantry. In retrospect, however, while not denying the importance of Sufism in Islam between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, I believe that this attempted refinement is also flawed by the assumption of a "single cause" for the spread of Islam in our region.

Pari passu with this concern for a single source and a single agent leading to the extension of Islam is a view of Islam as a single entity, which Westerners often see as a simply religious one. Islam is in fact multifaceted, and different facets of it make a primary appeal to different people with different backgrounds. The Western view which sees religion principally, if not solely, as a means of individual salvation is not adequate for a full discussion of Islam. Islam's appeal includes this, of course. But to be a Muslim means to be a member of a unique worldwide community. Thus, Islam represents a system of law and therefore, a guarantee of individual status within the community, as well as a system of religious and philosophical thought, and a wide range of mystical experiences.

Perhaps the most striking contribution to the "origin game" in the past ten years or so was made by S.Q. Fatimi in the vividly written and

[1] G.W.J. Drewes, "New Light on the Coming of Islam to Indonesia?" *BKI* 124, 4 (1968), pp. 433-359.

[2] A.H. Johns, "Sufism as a Category in Indonesian Literature and History", *JSEH* 2, 2 (1961), pp. 10-23.

interesting book *Islam comes to Malaysia.*[3] It presents two new ideas: one that Bengal is the most important single source of Islam in our region. The other is that Islam made its debut on the eastern shores of Southeast Asia, not on those in the west. He points out the significance of two monuments in Indochina dating from the eleventh century of our era. On the basis of these two monuments, he argues for a Canton —Phan'rang— East Malaya—Northeast Java axis for the penetration of Islam into the Malay world, two centuries before there is any evidence of Islam in the Straits of Malacca.

Fatimi's work did not fare well in the hands of reviewers. Drewes and de Josselin de Jong reviewed or referred to it in rather unfavorable terms.[4]

In some respects, the book is speculative and overenthusiastic. Nevertheless, these two eleventh-century monuments are important, and their presence, as Fatimi rightly notes, raises many questions, since the Chams did not become Muslims until 1470.

Fatimi, in drawing attention to them, quotes Ravaisse's interpretation of their significance at length:

> There existed there in the 11th century an urban population of whom we know very little. They were very different from the indigenous people in race, belief and habits. Their ancestors must have come about a century earlier, and must have married native women. They were merchants and craftsmen living in a perfectly well-organized society mixing more and more with the natives. They asked one of themselves to act as their representative and defender with respect to the authorities of the place. He was called Šayh al-sūq, and was assisted by the Naqīb [a merchant or craftsman in charge of the management of the community to which he belonged]. Along with him were "notables who, enriched by their commerce, occupied an important place."[5]

Fatimi analyzes an inscription on a tombstone and extracts from in three reasons for believing that it marks the grave of a Shi'ite: 1) it makes no reference to the Vision of God –a dogma from the Ash'arite Sunni tradition, but rejected by the Mu'tazilites and Shi'ites;[2] it

[3] S.Q. Fatimi, *Islam Comes to Malaysia* (Singapore, 1963).

[4] Drewes, *New Light.*

[5] Fatimi, *Islam*, pp. 43-44.

states that God takes account of all deeds (which is vague enough to be Shi'ite), not that he has created them— as the Ash' arites hold; 3) and perhaps most important, it mentions the house of the prophet, thereby including 'Ali, but omitting his companions Abu Bakr and Umar, who were usurpers, according to the Shi'a. He thus concludes that the community was Shi'ite.

He speculates as to how a Shi'ite community could have found its way to this distant region. He associates it with a revolt against the Umayads in 744 by Abdullah b. Mu'āwiyah, and his defeat in 747, as a result of which he and his followers fled —according to Muir— to the Far East, and thus eventually joined or became the nuclei for Muslim communities in Canton, Hainan and Champa.[6]

The evidence that he puts forward is weak. Neither of his detractors take up this point, nor does he himself develop it. Yet, he has suggested a means of propagation of Islam in Southeast Asia never before brought out or specifically documented: the role of refugee groups in forming Islamic settlements. Yet the role of such refugees can be substantiated in the Gujerat. It is said of the famous al-Mahā'mī (776/1374-735/1432) that he was born and died in Mahā'mi, one of the towns of Kawkan in the Deccan close to the Indian Ocean, and that he was one of a people called the Nawa'it, a group of the Qurays who fled Medina out of fear of Hajjāj b. Yūsuf, who conquered the city in 692.[7] Al-Hajjāj's' career —it is reported that he was responsible for the death of 120,000 people, most of them Shi'ites— was of the type which would create a large-scale exodus of likely victims.

It seems that the Arab community maintained itself in Kawkan with a relative degree of autonomy and that the outstanding leaders that emerged from it had an impact which cut across ethnic, residential, craft and political borders.

One cannot be as exact about the community in Indochina in the eleventh century. Fatimi's argument, however, that it was a Shi'ite community which had originally fled across central Asia, is plausible.

This concept of immigrant communities, which need not necessarily be refugees, may be a useful one for understanding other early evidence of Islam in the region, such as the tombstone (1082) of Fatimah in Leran in East Java. It may also be useful in understanding the character of the northern Sumatran port town of Pasai and the

[6] Ibid., p. 56.

[7] Al-Mahā'imī; See *Nuzhat al-Hawaṭir*, vol. 3, pp. 105-106.

rather puzzling remark in the *Sejarah Melayu* ("The Malay Annals") —a work without any historical authority— in a chapter purporting to give an account of events in Pasai in the fourteenth the century, that the people there knew Arabic.[8]

The nature of these communities remains obscure. In the case of Indochina and East Java, it appears that their cultural level was equivalent to that of the receiving communities, and that they were respected by and, indeed, served the non – Muslim rulers. In the case of Pasai, it is more likely that the Muslim community was an immigrant one of higher social level than the indigenous communities. At that particular stage in its history Pasai declared itself a Sultanate. This would explain the very sharp contrast between the people of Pasai and the people of the interior: the people of the city were civilized Muslims, with a Sultan, and those of the hinterland were cannibals —and remained so until the end of the nineteenth century. The two cases seem to represent two types of Islamization: the first that of refugee immigrants on a cultural level equal to the receiving community's; the second, that of immigrants on a cultural level superior to the receiving community's.

Another type of Islamization occurs with the conversion of the ruler of a "high culture" to Islam. This is the picture given by a text, rather suspect for the early period, the seventeenth century *Babad Tanah Jawi,* which purports to give the antecedents of the founder of the new kingdom of Mataram by Senapati. The text tells of a son of the ruler of the eastern Javanese inland kingdom of Majapahit being converted to Islam, revolting against his father, defeating him, and the divine effulgence of the kingship passing from a Buddhist kingdom to a Muslim one. Yet the word *Muslim* must be used with caution in this case. For even though Islam is acknowledged as a religion at the central Javanese Court, and Agung introduced the Muslim calendar in 1630 and made himself Sultan in 1641, the structuralist analysis of Professor Berg assigns to the Islam of Agung's reign, the role of Vishnuism in Majapahit.

It is difficult to find a term to characterize this development. Certainly, it does not involve a "highly selective return" to the purer faith of a largely imaginary Golden Age. Nor is it the result of an adaptive syncretic process in which the adaptors modify their beliefs and practices only sufficiently enough to avoid persecution by the

[8] C.C. Brown, trans., *"The Malay Annals", JMBRAS* 25, 2 and 3 (1952), p. 46.

dominant society. The adaptors are the dominating society. They incorporate Islam into their body of religious beliefs in order to maintain a particular structure. They persecute minorities or subjugate states which propagate a scripturalist understanding of Islam with exclusive claims of its own. Yet neither is this development a resultant or secondary change.

It is nevertheless clear that in securing a place in and becoming part of the religious structure of the Javanese Court, Islam increased the range of options from which the continuing generations of new sects in Java could draw materials. This phenomenon has been a constant one among the peasantry and lower classes in Central Java over at least the last two hundred years, representing a tradition which jeered and jibed at scripturalist Islam. Indeed, in the 1950's, by a curious paradox, many of these sects associated themselves with Communist-sponsored cultural movements as a means of preventing Islamic parties from gaining a dominant position at a national level, and to protect themselves from strongly assertive Muslim groups associated more with trade than with peasant-life, the court and the administration.

An example of yet another type is Malacca. Here we find an example of a newly established kingdom founded by a refugee from a Buddhist court in Singapore which early in its history accepts Islam, although when and under what circumstances is not clear.

Malacca was founded in 1400. According to Chinese accounts (Ying Sheng-lan quoted by Groeneveldt) its ruler and people were Muslim in 1416. According to a Portuguese source, the first ruler, or his successor, accepted Islam upon marriage to a princess from the long-Islamized port city of Pasai, across the straits.

This, one could interpret as an example of a religious change for the purposes of alliance, or participation in a commercial system. No state on the Straits of Malacca could maintain itself and profit from this system without the ability to police the waterway from both sides of the straits. A marriage alliance at the right time and, with it, a rapid growth in power could play a very important role.

The story of such an alliance does not occur in the Malaccan *Malay Annals*.[9] There is no mention of the conversion of the new state and its people to Islam until the time of its second ruler, known as Sultan Muhammad Shah (1424-1444). The story is a conventional one: the ruler sees a prophet in a dream, the prophet teaches him the

[9] Ibid.

confession of faith and foretells that in the coming afternoon a ship will arrive, bearing a teacher of the true religion. The ship, of course, arrives, the teacher descends from it, and the ruler and all his people accept Islam. Perhaps the most striking part of the story is the passage that tells how the teacher descends from the ship, and performs the *'asr* ("mid-afternnon") prayer on the shore. The members of the crowd who have gathered around ask each other, as the man prays: "What is this, bobbing up and down?"[10] In its simplicity, this provides a vivid picture of how Muslim ritual could both catch the imagination of, and puzzle, the outsider.

Another striking element in the *Malay Annals*, which could have a bearing on the establishment of Islam, is the Tamil coup d'état in 1446. According to one interpretation, in order to confirm the position of Islam, it removed a ruler from the throne who had revived the old South Sumatra-based Srivijayan-title "Sri Maharaja", and perhaps revived the status of Buddhism, the religion of the older state.

This interpretation is an appealing one, particularly to the kind of mind given to discerning the continuation of older traditions, temporarily hidden by new cultural styles. The evidence is too sparse to be certain, on this point. The possible religious implications may simply be adventitious, and the only useful facts gleaned from the story are that there was Tamil blood in the Malaccan line and that the Malaccan dynasty was not exempt from the jealousies common to ruling families. What is more important is that Muslim traders came regularly to Malacca, and that the Portuguese believed that in taking Malacca they were striking a major blow at the Muslim trading system that joined together "the two seas", the Indian Ocean and the China Sea. (From the same work, one may perhaps glean evidence that there was a constant traffic of religious teachers, whether from India or via India from the Middle East, attending to the spiritual needs of the Malaccan Court. On the other hand, there is no detailed reference to the life of trading communities or of the common people, no reference to a Qāḍī having power to advise the ruler on the administration of Islamic Law, no reference to either the ruler or the nobility making the pilgrimage to Mecca).

Thus, the status of Islam in Malacca is ambiguous. It is clear that the ruler and his court acknowledged Islam, and that several of the

[10] Ibid., p. 54.

communities of traders who constituted the various quarters characterizing the city —the Tamils, the Arabs, the Bengalis, for example— were Muslims. But it does not follow that all of the communities —e.g., the Javanese or the Chinese— were Muslims. The big questions, then, are the degree of Islamization of the ethnic Malays during this period, and their role in the international trading systems which, in Professor Levtzion's words, "looked towards the ocean, and turned their back to the inland population."

A much more interesting case is that of Acheh. Various Islamic elements occurring in the stories told by the *Malay Annals* about Malacca appear in a form that is historically convincing: the king is seen as ruler of an Islamic community; Islamic teachers have a role in the court and governmental administration, and deal with foreign visitors; a series of religious teachers from South Asia and the Islamic heartlands brings books for explication and commentary; the Achehnese themselves make the pilgrimage to Mecca and study in the intellectual centers of Islam, the Hijaz and the Yemen; a continuous correspondence is maintained between Acheh and Arabia on religious matters; and the State pursues a vigorous foreign policy. The Achehnese Court is in close contact with the Mogul Court and, in fact, imitated the administration and rituals of the Mogul Court. It sends emissaries to Istanbul and has relations with the states of East Africa, which face it across the Indian Ocean.

It was during the period that saw the rise of Acheh that similar Muslim coastal ports developed on the northern coast of Java, the most important of which was Baten (1526), on the west of the island, but we should also mention Ceribon, Demak, Jepara and Surabaya.

Each of these has its own story to tell. In important respects, each was similar to Acheh: they were internationally oriented and faced out to sea, but each had a different cultural mix and backed onto those stubbornly structured agrarian societies which supported the wet rice cultivation of Central and East Java. They await exploration. But whatever form or school of Islam was established in these port cities, Dutch presence at Batavia from 1620 onwards and the Company's imposition of monopolies crippled their economic base and shifted the balance of power back to the interior, thereby having an important influence on the character of Islamization.

There is still another mode of Islamization which, at first sight, appears simplistic. This is the gradual acceptance of Islam by peoples to whom Muslims represented a superior culture, but among whom

they did not set up politically significant centers of trade. One may take, as an example, the coastal peoples of Borneo who, little by little, imitated the social practices and habits of the traders who came to them regularly: abstaining from pork, picking up Arabic phrases for the confession of faith, learning ritual prayers, and starting to dress in a way which conforms to Muslim ideas of modesty.

This is a process which is still continuing, and it represents the opposite side of the coin to the contemporary inroads which secularism has made among Muslims in the big cities. Yet this, too, is a mode which occurs in many forms. One of the most striking of them is the progress of Islam among the Rejang, a hill-people of South Sumatra.[11] Their immediate neighbors, the Minangkabau of Central Sumatra, are one of the core cultural groups on the island and are numbered among the staunchest Muslim communities in the archipelago. They are also keen traders, and their trading activities are currently bringing them into closer contact with this less advanced minority group. The Rejang look up to the Minangkabau, and among the characteristics that they admire is their Islamic belief. Islam, then, is a status symbol, and to become a Muslim is to gain social standing. But the Minangkabau are also a matrilineal society in which ancestral property is passed down the female line; land and residence are administered by older brothers and maternal uncles, and marriage is matrilocal. In accepting Islam, the Rejang are abandoning their own patriarchal system —actually more appropriate to Islam— in favor of the Minangkabau social-structure package. This may be an extreme case, but it is sufficient to show the variety of forms generated when Islam is learned by imitation. It is a process which may be observed in Irian, Borneo, the aboriginal peoples of South Sumatra, and the Mentawai Islands. This, however, lies properly within the field of the anthropologist.

For the historian, however, the establishment of Islamic port cities, and Islam winning a place —though not an exclusive one— in the high court culture of Mataram are the keys to the Islamization of the region.

From these points, the spread of Islam varied, in degree, as to scope and intensity. For throughout these territories, Islam is an unevenly distributed mosaic. Fairly consistently spread among the "Malay" population of the Malay Peninsula (but not among the aborigines), the pattern is somewhat variegated in Sumatra, and strikingly so in

[11] M.A. Jaspan, "The Rejang of South Sumatra", (Ph. D. thesis, A.N.U., 1965).

Java. Clearly, diffusion from urban centers has ocurred, but what was the modality of this diffusion?

Difussion is the third component in our discussion, following the questions about source and agent. It is also the most difficult and does not allow a single answer any more than the other two. Yet, even as we accept Levtzion's excellent phrase about the port cities looking out across the ocean, we need to consider the mechanisms by which the new religion spread to the interior. Personal conversion is a possibility. It is not unknown in Malay and Javanese literature, but it is not common.[12] We need to constantly reiterate that Islam begins its work through outward conduct, and then is recognized by orthopraxis which gradually becomes interiorized and spiritually enriched. One should not judge the acceptance of Islam in the same way as one judges the acceptance of a convert into the Catholic Church, in modern Europe, which requires a long period of instruction at the end of which the candidate is spiritually and intellectually a Catholic, and reception into the church is a formal recognition of what has already taken place. In Islam, the opposite is the case. Therefore, social mechanisms are of real importance.

In an earlier essay I suggested that "the network of extended family relationships characteristic of peasant family structures continued to link town dwellers to the countryside, and served to spread, dilute and restructure elements of the urban culture in ever-widening circles".[13] A recent paper by Dr. Pearson takes up I.M. Lapidus' concept of the ethno-city. He argues (his essay is devoted to the relationship between village and city, not to Islamization) that in structural terms, "there is no need for any urban-rural dichotomy; rather all subjects should be visualized as members of both groups, whether these are urban, rural or spread over both."[14] Thus, and individual should be regarded as belonging to various circles, whether according to kin, residence, trade, devotional needs, or ties to a place of origin. These circles bring him into a very wide range of contacts and, as the city is linked to the outer "suburb," and the outer suburb to the village, and one village

[12] For example the conversion of the highway robber Raden Said who became the saint Kali Jaga. *Babad Tanah Jawi*. Olthof edition, p. 21-22.

[13] A.H. Johns, "Islam in Southeast Asia: Problems of Perspective", in *Southeast Asian History and Historiography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 304-320.

[14] M. Pearson, "Pre-modern Muslim Political Systems," (Panel paper presented to the Symposium on Islam: Society, Politics and Thought; Asian Studies Association of Australia, Melbourne, 1976).

to the next, and so on, provide the mechanisms by which Islam is spread. Urban and peasant systems, then, represent points on a continuum, and the peasant end of the continuum is less likely to be exclusively Islamic and more likely to reveal different levels of ideological tincture than the urban end.

This discussion has still left unanswered the question as to what generated these Islamic port cities in the first place? It is a question not easily answered, for to speak simply in terms of merchants or even mystics may be begging a question to which there are several answers; some contradictory, but all correct in some cases.

It would be an imprudence to discount the dignity, simplicity and spiritual power of Islam as a religion. Yet in addition to this, Islam has the additional dimension of membership of a community, of a community in which rule by law is of paramount importance.

Muslim law covers every aspect of life, whether ritual, personal, family, criminal or commercial. And it may well be that one of the bases of Islamization in Southeast Asia was the stability and confidence that Muslim commercial law engendered among members of the Muslim trading community.

Here, at least, is a specific answer to the question *cui bono*. It must be conceded that the greatest proportion of manuscripts related to Islam in our region is concerned with mysticism. Very few, if any at all, relate to commerce. This, at first sight, might appear to weaken the case for the importance of Islamic commercial law. Yet, in a region that depends on international trade, it is a striking paradox that none of the chronicles or literary works associated with the Malay Courts such as Pasai, Malacca, Acheh or Riau show any concern for or familiarity with commerce. One may speculate on the reasons for this: whether or not the ruler participated directly or indirectly in trade, or whether commerce was regarded as too lowly to rate a mention in court circles. But certainly the absence of direct references to trade is characteristic of all written records from the region, not only the Islamic ones. Thus, one cannot argue *a silentio* that Muslim law broker did not have a role in the establishment of Islam. It would be a curious irony if —after a discussion of Islam in the Malay world, in which so much attention has been given to the study of the mystical forms of the religion, at the expense of the *fiqh* —the foundation of the religion were due, in the first place, to its role in providing a principal of order in commerce. Yet this is in fact part of the genius of Islam: social order is necessary for spiritual order.

A major difficulty in assessing the character of Islam in our region is the relative recentness of the extant manuscripts: virtually none are from earlier than the seventeenth century. It is difficult to be sure of the representativeness of what has survived from that period. The largely Sufistic character of those manuscripts may give not only an exaggerated picture of the role of Sufism at that time, but may tempt us to extrapolate backwards and attribute to the Islam of the thirteenth century as a whole what may have been true of only part of the Islam in the region in the seventeenth century. Periodization, then, is a problem. And it is not simply a question of periodization in one place, but of a large number of places, all far apart, and each with its own traditions and background, and different levels of Islamization might be present in the same place at the same time.

A major requirement for understanding Islam in Southeast Asia is the study of comparative material to discover where else Islam has established itself with a similar environment and facing a similar dichotomy of trading and agricultural communities. Tropical Africa could provide useful materials for comparison, for we find the same dichotomy there between the autonomous Muslim communities in commercial towns such as Timbuktu, which is functionally analogous to Acheh (in which the *ulama'* maintained a high standard of Islamic scholarship, had contact with other centers of learning in the Muslim world, and were concerned with the application of Islamic law), and the popular Islam of the interior, which is analogous, say, to that of the central Javanese peasantry. It is striking, however, that Levtzion, in writing on this topic, finds no significant role for the *ṭarīqa* in West Africa before the eighteenth century, whereas in Sumatra they were certainly well established in the seventeenth and even late sixteeenth centuries.[15] The evidence from such comparisons, then, must be used with caution, even if the comparison has provided wider perspectives, and perhaps made a sense of proportion possible.

Despite the importance of the comparative approach, however, and in view of the disparate character of Islam in the region, the only secure base for the historian of Islam is to patiently seek out the foundation of religious schools and to trace their development and evolution. There is no room for the maverick in traditional Islam: a

[15] N. Levtzion. "Patterns of Islamization in West Africa," in *Aspects of West African Islam*, ed. O.F. McCall and N.B. Bennett, Boston University Papers on Africa, vol. 5 (Boston: Boston University, 1971), p. 39.

religious teacher has no status in his own right. He represents the impression which the school in which he was trained and the mystical brotherhood to which he belonged made upon him. His authenticity and the guarantee of his competence as a member of that school is provided by the line of transmission he can produce, which depends on the authority of his teacher, that of his teacher's teacher, and so on. The Arabic biographical dictionaries, in fact, provide us with complex clusters of lines of transmission —vertically and horizontally— with the associations of each individual with colleagues, and perhaps *their* teachers.

The identification of such schools in what is now Indonesia is not easy. It is, however, possible to identify some components of the religious scene in seventeenth-century Acheh quite clearly. One can refer to the remarkable, mystical Malay poetry of Hamzah Pansuri (d. 1600); the appearance of a different type of mysticism in the writings of Šams al-Dīn (d. 1630); the book-burning and persecutions begun by al-Raniri (d. 1657), who gained the patronage of the Sultan of Acheh in 1637; and the extraordinary religious figure 'Abd al-Ra'ūf, who, returning to Acheh in 1661 after having studied and taught in the Yemen, Mecca and Medina for twenty years, gained the patronage of Ṣafīyat al-Dīn, Sultan of Acheh (1641-1675), and became the teacher of thousands of Jawi pilgrims to the Holy Land over the next thirty years, until his death in 1690.

'Abd al-Ra'ūf is, in fact, especially important, because he gave an account of the places where he had studied in Yemen and the teachers of the subjects he had taken, as a codicil to one of his work. In it, he gave special prominence to two of his teachers of mysticism at Medina: al-Qušāši and Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (one of the greatest exponents of Naqsbandi mysticism of the eleventh/seventeenth century), both of whom receive copious entries in biographical dictionaries.

Unfortunately, such link-ups are not easy to find. And although Jawi wcholars are referred to as a group in works such as the *Fawa'id al-irtihāl* by al-Hamawi (d. 1716; he himself a pupil of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī), to attempt to identify them in Arabic sources is like looking for needles in the proverbial haystack.

Besides Acheh, Palembang is another center of religious teaching that offers possibilities. 'Abd al-Samad was a famous eighteenth-century Palembang scholar, who had also studied in Arabia. He is famous for his Malay abridgement of al-Ghazali's *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn*,

which is still being published commercially in Singapore and Malaysia together with other works of his. Information about a Medinan scholar is provided by an Arabic manuscript in the Jakarta Museum: a commentary by Sadīq al-Madanī b.'Umar Khān on the qasīda *al-nafhat al-Qudsiyya* by Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qādiri al-Madani al-Sammān (d. 1189), made at the request of 'Abd al-Samad.[16]

It is appropriate here to mention another Muslim scholar from Palembang, Kimas Fakhruddīn, who lived in the second half of the eighteenth century. He is best known for a Malay work, *Kitāb Mukhtasar,* which draws on the *Risāla fi'l-Tawhīd* of Ruslan al Dimisqi (d. 540/1146), and for the two commentaries on this work: *Fath al-Rahmān* by Zakariyā' al-Ansārī (d. *c.* 1520) and *Khamrat al-Khān* by 'Abd al-Ghanī B. Isma'īl (D. 1731).[17]

This work and those of Abd al-Samad are clearly of a different character from those of any of the four authors from Acheh. Thus, there is clearly a Palembang tradition which is worthy of study in its own right.

The same must be true, also, of Banten, on the northern coast of Java, not far to the west of present-day Jakarta. Banten has had a Muslim history since 1526, and it is possible that the oldest extant Muslim manuscript, published by G.W.J. Drewes as *The Admonitions of Seh Bari,* comes from there.[18] The Bantenese tradition of Islamic learning is virtually unstudied, and what such a study may reveal cannot be predicted. It may be suggestive, however, that Frederich and Van den Berg's catalogue of Arabic manuscripts in what is now the Jakarta Museum, contains a great many manuscripts from Banten. Moreover, one of the very greatest Jawi scholars of the nineteenth century, al Shaykh Muhammad Nawawī al-Jāwī, was a Bantenese whose name is still fresh in Banten religious circles. In Cairo, he published a scholarly, two-volume Arabic commentary on the Qur'ān which deserves careful study. Even though it is eclectic in some respects, drawing on classical commentators such as al-Baydawi and Zamakhsarī, in others it seems to be original in its use of sources, and in yet others, it develops emphases which may be of particular relevance to his fellow countrymen. Perhaps it was not for nothing that

[16] Supplement to the *Catalogue of Arabic Mss of the Batavian Society*, p. 164-165.

[17] Oral communication by. G.W.J. Drewes.

[18] G.W.J. Drewes, *The Admonitions of Seh Bari* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1969).

the fly-leaf described him as "Sayyid 'ulamā' al-Hijāz": Lord of the learned of Hijāz.

Acheh, Palembang and Banten are three examples of religious schools with well-established affiliations to the Holy Land, each representing different facets of Islam, facets which shifted, emphases which changed with the passing of the years. They are not the only ones. Even limiting oneself to Sumatra, it may be noted that the beginnings of the Padri movement among the Minangkabau date from the return of three scholars from Mecca in 1803. It is very unlikely that they happened to be three individuals who returned at one particular time. Rather, they were representatives of their ethnic region's tradition of religious study in the Holy Land. It is reported, for example, that the famous Minangkabau Ahmad Khatib, who settled in Mecca in the late nineteenth century and married a daughter of the Sharīf, was an example for successive generations of pilgrims and aspirant scholars coming from his ethnic region.

Similar networks of relationships certainly must exist between religious schools in Arabia and other centers of the Malay world, whether in Borneo, on the nothern coast of Java —Ceribon, for example— or Makassar (now Ujung Padang).

Islam in Southeast Asia in the pre-modern period, then, presents a picture of bewildering complexity. The answer to the problems it poses is simply, in many cases, that there is no answer.

What, then, of the modern period, if by modern we understand that period beginning, on the one hand, with the dawn of the reform movement led by Muhammad 'Abduh and, on the other, with the appearance of mass movements in the Dutch Empire which cut across regional and ethnic boundaries. These mass movements were seeded by the Dutch ethical policy which, at the turn of the century, sought to make Western education available to some of its colonial subjects in partial payment for a "debt of honor' to the Indies", and by the increasing centralization of Dutch power in Batavia which drew together the various parts of its empire.

It was these factors which led to the establishment in 1912, of the reformist organization, the Muhammadiyya, which successfully combined the rationalist, reformist, and dynamic interpretation of the Islam of Muhammad Abduh with Western education. Making use of Western organizational and administrative techniques to develop educational and welfare institutions, and using the techniques of Western Christian missionaries to teach a purified,

revitalized Islam. Its approach was simple, fundamentalist and highly normative. Its aims were to win new Muslims and to reconvert traditional Muslims. In Java, if I may use Levtzion's analysis, it attempted to deprive the pagan (in Geertz's classificqation, *abangan)* pole of its magnetism and to create a socio-political system in which its understanding of Islam would be a desirable norm to which people could be drawn by an individual conversion based on an appeal to reason. It is an effort which is still continuing. Yet, it is striking that, despite the contribution the Muhammadiyya has made to Indonesia, its success has been almost exclusively among the middle or proto-middle classes. Those whom it tried to reconvert, as I mentioned above, sought a protective umbrella from the Communist party.

The Muhammadiyya's success prompted a response from leaders of Islamic communities in Java. These leaders were more tolerant of peasant culture. The traditions, ceremonies and folk beliefs and practices with which they had grown up were an integral part of their being Muslims. The story of this movement is too complex to present here. It is perhaps enough to note that when both movements became politicized in the early 50's, and as political parties campaigned against each other in Indonesia's first general election in 1955, the principal theoretical issue which divided them and on which they campaigned was whether Indonesia should be an Islamic state in which every Muslim could be his own *mujtahid,* or whether it should be an Islamic state based on one of the four schools of Islamic Law founded before the gates of Ijmā' swung shut.

When positions seem so clearly polarized, and the points of difference are so clearly expressed, a warning bell should sound. Nothing is ever as simple as this. The dangers that have attended the study of Southeast Asian Islam in the past are raising their menacing heads again.

Religious Changes in the Conquest of Mexico

Eva Alexandra Uchmany

Introduction

The overseas discoveries that began in the fifteenth century and continued during the sixteenth permitted Spain, which at the time considered itself to be the defender and propagator of the Catholic faith, to continue the crusade which it had been carrying on for centuries in its own country. It also served to prepare Spain for the new mission which history had assigned it at that time: the discovery of America. The reconquest of Arab territories, accomplished in 1492 by the Catholic kings, was encouraged as much by the wish to possess those rich lands, which Moslem agriculture had made so unlike the asperity of Spanish possessions, as by the will to implant the cross on the lands of the Crescent Moon. The religious ideal that pervaded the reconquest, mixed with the popular-urban religiosity which had been accentuated by the black plague and other epidemics in the fourteenth century and intensified by the preachings of the medicant orders, served as the pillar of unification for Spain's Christian towns.

The Jews were required to convert, and those who did not accept the Catholics' way of life were expelled from Spain one day before Columbus set sail towards the unknown fourth continent. In order to keep an eye on the orthodoxy of the new Christians, the Catholic Kings instituted the Tribunal of the Inquisition in 1478, which had been approved by Pope Sixtus IV. The Holy Office, placed from the very beginning in the service of the Spanish Church and State, collaborated with Their Majesties in pursuing political goals and did not hesitate to occasionally transform itself into a police instrument to break local rebellions opposed to the incipient national unity. Religion, transformed into the justification of the State, made the Church a truly national institution virtually independent of the pope, jealously guarding its prerogatives and its autonomy vis-à-vis the Holy See, notwithstanding its universal spirit and abundant missionary zeal.

The strengthening of the institution of monarchy inspired men like Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros —a member of the Order of Saint Francis, cardinal of Spain since 1507, and twice regent of the kingdom— to collaborate in the Hispanicization of the Church. The policy of compelling the mass conversion of the Moslems of Granada, who had enjoyed the religious tolerance stipulated in the accords of the capitulation in 1492, was imposed by the cardinal in 1499. With the same zeal he reformed the country's religious orders and subjected the friars to stern religious observance and comportment. At the same time, imbued with the Italian Renaissance spirit and with Erasmus' *Philosphia Christi,* he founded the University of Alcalá and undertook the publication of the *Biblia Poliglota,* in whose elaboration he permitted several converted Arabs and Hebrews to collaborate. As a result of the cardinal's varied activities, the Spanish Church gained new vigor and power at a time when the Church was generally the object of strong attacks.

The first missionaries who came to America in the wake of territorial conquest were the fruit of Cisneros' religious reform. From the beginning, they were pushed by a spirit and norms opposite to those which guided the conquistadors. Some tried to implant the principles of the Primitive Church in the New World. The first friars, in accordance with their status and profession, directed all their activities toward the salvation of the souls they wanted to lead to heaven. For this reason, their efforts and interests, although they were not contrary to the aims of the conquistadors insofar as the propagation of the Christian faith was concerned, did clash with them. It is obvious that even though religion was a secondary motive of the conquest, it justified it, was its standard bearer and was even transformed into its apparent conscience. At the same time, it was only thanks to evangelization that Spain was granted the rights and the moral support for this undertaking from the spiritual head of Christianity.[1]

So, fifteenth and sixteenth century Spain which had come to conquer, colonize and evangelize the recently discovered continent, felt that it was elected by Providence for this mission. Such sentiments were expressed by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo,[2] Francisco López de

[1] See Alejandro VI, *Bulas de donación,* in Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, *Tratados,* trans. Agustín Millares Carlo and Rafael Moreno, vol. 2 (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965), app. 1.

[2] Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias, islas y Tierra*

Gómara,[3] and Diego de Landa who thought that "...Spain can glory in God, since he chose her from among other nations for the salvation of so many people..."[4] Father Gerónimo de Mendieta had the same conception of the conquest of America, and many other contemporaries were of the same opinion.[5]

The conquest of America, in general, and of New Spain, in particular; had the character of a mixed economic enterprise. The conquest of New Spain was paid for by Diego Velázquez, the governor of Cuba, acting as a capitalist partner; by Cortez who contributed all of his estate and even got himself into debt; and by the soldiers who carried with them everything they had. These individuals, once the enterprise was carried out, tried not only to recuperate their investment but also to obtain maximum profits. When the Crown —which normally invested nothing but its name and authority— became owner of the newly acquired lands, it felt obliged to compensate the conquistadors and grant them benefits consisting of land, water and Indians. The *encomendero,* in exchange for the tributes and services he received from the Indians under his authority (larger or smaller family groups, with their chief, generally concentrated in a town or perhaps in several towns), was legally obliged to protect them and take charge of their religious instruction. These last two duties of the *encomendero* were, nevertheless, totally incompatible with his desire to rapidly amass a fortune. To this end he used royal favors (water, land and Indian labor) as his only investment, since he lacked any other capital. He exploited the Indians as mere encomendados, slaves who were treated as instruments of work and who had no legal protection. The latter paid tribute and lent their personal services, which meant forced labor. Moreover, in many cases, they were employed in rough mining jobs or as *tamames* (porters) who transported merchandise, arms and even men on their backs. Without a doubt, these contradictions made acculturation very difficult for the Indians, not only because Spanish culture was very strange to them and

Firme del mar océano, vol. 1 bk. 6, chap. 8, (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1851), pp. 178-9.

[3] Francisco López de Gómara, *Historia general de las Indias,* vol. 2 (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1932), 42 passim.

[4] Diego de Landa, *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* (México: Portrúa, 1959), p. 138.

[5] Gerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica indiana,* vol. 4 (México: Salvador Chávez Hayhoe, 1945), passim.

they did not understand Christ's worth, but also because while it saved the soul it generally enslaved the body.

The Mexica before the conquest

The Aztec-Mexitin civilization combined the main elements of the cultures of the central altiplano, whose towns they dominated and exploited economically during the last one hundred years of pre-Columbian history. They considered themselves a people chosen by their tutelary god Huitzilopochtli. According to Mexica sources, that choice had already been made in their mystic homeland, Aztlan, and was cemented by a pact in which the idea of sacrifice, based on the principle of the interrelation of *do ut des*, was implicit. The young god-warrior Huitzilopochtli had chosen his people to govern the nations they might manage to subjugate with his help. In exchange, the Mexica promised to provide him with the food capable of generating the divine energy which was the motor of the universe: human blood and hearts.

The idea of being elected took shape together with the bellicose character of these people who were obliged to defend themselves during their migrations from the Chichimecs and others and later, from their powerful neighbors in the valley that is named after them. Necessity and circumstances made the hunter - gatherers and semi-farmers into a nation of warriors, par excellence. Mystifying their defeats as well as their successes, they came to think of themselves as the people chosen to conquer and dominate other nations. This feeling became manifest when the Mexica lent their services as mercenaries of the Tepanecs, who governed the Valley of Mexico in the first half of the fifteenth century. In fact, it was at that time that the Aztec-Mixitin transformed themselves into a power in the valley. Their victory over their erstwhile masters, over Azcapotzalco, was considered clear testimony of their character as a chosen people and the point of departure for a new stage in their history.

Itzcoatl, the lord of the victorious Mexica, in agreement with Tlacaelel and Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina, ordered that the paintings in which they kept their history be burnt and had the past interpreted anew. The retranslation of the past established the guidelines of the future. From then on, Huitzilopochtli not only guided the destiny of his people, but was also considered minister of the history of the other

nations, which he made fall one by one into the hands of the Aztec-Mexitin.

The histories of the god and of his people were fused into one from the very beginning. Every tribal leader identified himself with the deity and considered himself to be his representative on earth. As the Mexica's authority expanded, the titles and attributes of the tutelary god Huitzilopochtli were multiplied. He even managed to be transformed into the hero of postclassical myths. The *idea* of sacrifice, intimately connected with the creation myths, was transformed into *ideology*. The chosen people felt themselves commissioned to collaborate in the maintenance of the universe and, as the agents of the god in his manifestation as the sun, intensified war and conquest.

Nevertheless, even though the Mexica identified Huitzilopochtli with Tonatiuh, the sun, the former never came to be considered as a universal god in the Mesoamerican altiplano. Instead, first, the nocturnal sun, the omnipresent and omnipotent jaguar god Tezcatlipoca, and second the multifaceted Quetzalcoatl, the personification of the air, of the morning star and the god of creation, were conceived as such. Both of them, in a remote and originative era, collaborated in the construction of the universe while at the same time they were eternal rivals and enemy protagonists in the mythicized destruction of Tula. In a contrary way, Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl played the same role in the Spanish conquest of Mexico. In the conquest the Indian world, ruled by the guidelines of its own world view, witnessed the fulfillment of a fatal prophecy intercalated in the constellation of time. According to this prophecy, in the year *ce acatl* (one-cane), which was repeated every fifty-two years, the god Quetzalcoatl could return. Hernán Cortez, who landed in Chalchiuhcueyecan (present-day San Juan de Ulúa, Veracruz) in April 1519, a year which coincided with the Indian year *ce acatl*, was considered to be the returning god.

The attack on the indigenous gods.

The conquistador, in his march from Chachiuhcueyacan to Tenochtitlan, accompanied by some three-hundred Spaniards, not only dismembered the Mexica empire, but also demolished the indigenous gods in the cities where he felt he could do so, as on the island of Cozumel and in Cempoala.

The *Cacique Gordo*, as the Spanish called the lord of Cempoala, was the first Indian chief that allied himself with them, since he hoped

to use them against the hated Mexica, to whom he paid heavy tribute. Cortez, intelligent and astute, turned the situation around, and soon became the protector of the Totonacs against the emissaries and army of Motecuhzoma II Xocoyotzin. Immediately afterwards, the former were exhorted to swear vassalage to the king of Spain and, as vassals, were required to stop practicing human sacrifices immediately and to demolish their own gods. The Indians felt deeply offended and the reply of the nobles and priests was that "it was not good for them to abandon their idols and sacrifices, and that those gods gave them health and good crops and everything they needed...[6] Cortez insisted, ordering the Cacique to have idols demolished. The latter already had his army ready to defend their gods and warned the Spanish that if they continued their offensive, the numina would destroy them along with the Cempoaltecs. This was sufficient for the Castilians to take up the gauntlet and, for the "honor of God," declare war on the Cempoaltecs (their only ally at that time) and threaten them with the Mexica forces. According to Bernal Díaz, the latter argument prevailed and the Totonacs accepted that the Spanish be responsible for and commit the sacrilege, harboring the hope that the gods knew how to defend themselves.[7]

The drama of divine and human impotence in the face of the destruction of what was sacred, feared and revered is described by Bernal Díaz in the following words:

> More than fifty of us soldiers climbed up and toppled them, and those idols came rolling down and broke into bits and they were like frightening dragons, as large as calves, and other shapes like half men, and large dogs, and horribly ugly. And when they saw them all broken like that, the *caciques* and *papas* who were with them, cried and covered their eyes, and in Totonac language asked to be forgiven, and that it was no longer in their hands, nor were they to blame, but rather these *teules* that topple you, and that out of fear of the Mexica they did not attack us.

The Totonac armies, in the face of the tremendous offense which wounded their deepest feelings, readied their bows and only Cortez's

[6] Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, vol. 1 (México: Porrúa, 1960), p. 160.

[7] Ibid., p. 161.

quick action avoided a catastrophe. Together with some other captains, he fell upon the nobles and priests, threatening them with death unless the Cacique Gordo broke up his armies.

However, even though the Totonacs feared the Mexica, fear was not the only factor which conditioned their sometimes vacillating actions in the face of the destruction of the gods. The Mexica's idea that Cortez was the embodiment of Quetzalcoatl returning to take the scepter of command[8] did not escape the Cempoaltecs, and one supposes that they preferred to have the foreigners, the purported gods, on their side. This desire, no doubt mitigated the drama of the sacrilege of the indigenous gods, who, in the end, lost the battle against the other gods. At the same time the Spaniards started the "holy war" in Mesoamerica, for the "exaltation of the Catholic faith" and to "extend the limits of Christianity," which the Castilian spokesman, Alonso, the bishop of Cartagena, had already announced in 1434 at the Council of Basel.[9]

Totonac conscience was apparently placated when no cataclysm occurred as a consequence of the physical destruction of the manifestations of the deities. Immediately afterward eight young maidens, whom the Cacique Gordo presented to Cortez, were baptized in a ceremony attended by all the prominent nobles of the area. The pious images of the Virgn and Christ were introduced in a ruthless manner into the magic environment of a community which, conceiving the human condition in its own way and confronting the new god, cautiously waited to see what would result from the multiple mysteries that began with the swearing of vassalage to the emissary of a distant and enigmatic emperor.

A similar ceremony was repeated in Tlaxcala, the principal ally of the Spanish against the Mexica. In this city, because of the previous warning of the Indian priests, Cortez did not dare to attack the vernacular gods. But in Tenochtitlan, at the beginning of the year

[8] Montezuma II Xocoyotzin, the *tlatoani* ("the orator, he who commands"), to whom everyone gave tributes, prepared a divine and royal reception for Cortez, and gave him cloaks of gold. See Eva A. Uchmany, *Motecuhzoma II Xocoyotzin y la conquista de México* (México: INJUVE, 1972).

[9] Américo Castro, *La realidad histórica de España* (México: Porrúa, 1966), p. 85. As one of the contradictions occuring in history, one should point out that Alonso de Santa María was a converted Jew and, like many in his condition, he achieved a preeminent place in Spanish society.

1520, the conquistador exhorted Motecuhzoma II Xocoyotzin, who was held prisoner in his own city, to stop practicing the rite of human sacrifice and to request the priests to give up a part of the main pyramid for the erection of a chapel dedicated to the Christian cult. Previously, the *tlatoani* had sworn obedience to Charles V, since he considered Cortez to be Quetzalcoatl or his ambassador. This oath tacitly implied the legalization of the "spiritual conquest," which by religious zeal was directed by the principle *cuyus regio sius religio,* which was already, in fact, law in Europe.[10]

The Indian priests delayed answering and, at the end of March or the beginning of April of that year, Cortez decided to act on his own. An eyewitness, the conquistador Andrés de Tapia, tells us that one day Cortez and some ten Spaniards climbed up the main pyramid as if "for fun." With their swords, they moved the covering on the shrine at the summit of the tower and saw that: "All the walls of the inside of the house were made of stone imagery of the type that the wall was made of. These images were idols, and had in their mouth and on their bodies and parts much blood, the thickness of two or three fingers, and he uncovered the idols set with precious stones..."[11]

The cold, calculating *condotiere*, transformed into a Knight of the Cross (similar to those which are described in the knightly stories of the Amadis de Gaula):

> called so that we all heard: "Oh God! Why do you consent to the devil being so greatly honored in the land?" And after giving a short doctrinal speech, ordered the astonished public: "and I want the image of God and his blessed mother to be here where you have these idols, and bring water to wash these walls, and we will remove all this here". They laughed, as if it could not be done, and said: "Not only this city, but all the world has these as gods, and this is here because of Uchilobos [Huitzilopochtli] whose we are: and none of the people hold their fathers nor mothers nor children for anything in comparison with him, and they were resolved to risk death [for him]; and see that

[10] Translated: "Whoever has power, is lord of religion." This prevailed in law in the Hapsburg empire in the middle of the sixteenth century.

[11] "Relación hecha por el señor Andrés de Tapia sobre la conquista de México," in *Colección de documentos para la historia de México,* ed. Joaquín García Icazbalceta, vol. 2 (México: Porrúa, 1971), pp. 584-586.

having observed you coming up here, all have armed themselves and want to die for their gods."

Cortez answered: "I am very glad and I am to fight for my God against your gods, which are nothing." Exhalted with divine wrath, "he took an iron bar which was there, and started to hit the idols of precious stones; and I give my word as a gentleman, and I swear to God that it is true, that it now seems to me that the marquis was jumping supernaturally... saying: we have to do something for God's sake."[12]

Motecuhzoma was horrified to witness the sacrilege and proposed a compromise to Cortez: to place the images in the shrine alongside the gods. It is obvious that the conquistador not only did not want to, but also was unable to accept the offer. In the polytheist world, one can deny one god, fight against another and, even, as a sign of victory, take the enemy's god prisoner —a custom that the Aztec-Mexitin practiced— and it is always permissible to adopt a new deity. In contrast, monotheist religion is intolerant in its vision and essence because it recognizes only one truth: its own. The representative of the Spain that had transformed Catholicism into the justification of the State, could not yield.

The gods are dead

The conquest of Tenochtitlan marked the beginning of the expansion of Spanish power and the imposition of new cultural patterns in Mesoamerica. The Spaniards were sure that God was on their side and that the conquest was a work of Providence. Santiago, the patron saint of the reconquest, was invoked constantly. Many soldiers thought they had seen him during battle. Others managed to recognize the Virgin fighting for them.

For their part, the Indian towns considered the defeat of the Triple Alliance (Tenochtitlan-Tezcoco-Tlacopan) a miracle and, as such, they even marveled at it. Bernal Diaz tells how several nobles brought their small children to witness the incredible spectacle.[13] On such occasions, towns which had never been under Mexica domination, as, for

[12] Ibid.

[13] Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera*, vol. 2, pp. 27 and 71.

example, the Tarascans of Michoacan, offered themselves to Cortez as vassals. The conquistador, with his renowned charisma, was considered to be an arbiter and noble throughout the Indian world connected in some way with the Mexica empire. The Tenochcas themselves considered the destruction of their city as the victory of the newly-arrived gods over the ancestral ones. This idea was also confirmed by the Indian priests in the *Coloquios* which they held with the twelve Franciscans in 1524.[14]

Cortez transformed the arrival of the "twelve" into an Act of Faith. He went out to meet the Franciscans, accompanied by the majority of Spaniards and the principal Indian chiefs:

> He knelt before Friar Martin de Valencia and went to kiss his hands... and he would not consent to it, and he kissed his habit and those of all the other clergy, and so did all the rest of us captains and soldiers who went there, and also Guatemuz [Cuauhtemoc] and the nobles of Mexico. And when Guatemuz and the other chiefs saw Cortez falling on his knees to kiss their hands, they were greatly astonished, and seeing that the friars, were barefoot and in torn habits, and that they did not bring horses, but rather went on foot and were very sallow, and seeing Cortez, whom they held for an idol or a thing from their gods, kneeling thus before them, from then on, all the Indians followed the example.[15]

With this act, the conquistador gave the Franciscans a share in the prestige that he enjoyed and opened the doors to the Indian world for them. In addition, the example was transformed into a custom and took the shape of a law, as Bernal notes: "... now when the clergy come they show them those greetings and reverences."[16] Cortez himself, as Phelan emphasizes, coldly calculated this reception beforehand, because he was trying for a political alliance with the friars.[17]

[14] Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, "El libro de las pláticas o coloquios de los doce primeros misioneros de México," in *Revista mexicana de estudios históricos* 1, no. 6 (1927): 101-141.

[15] Ibid., 2:177

[16] Ibid., p. 178.

[17] John L. Phelan, *El reino milenario de los franciscanos en el Nuevo Mundo* (México: UNAM, 1972), pp. 58-60.

From that time, the Franciscans were the allies par excellence of Cortez, whom they considered a second Moses in their writings. In turn, this order generally favored the interests of the band of *conquistadores-encomenderos* in their disputes with royal officials, who enjoyed the sympathies of the Dominicans.

The Franciscans, who had recently arrived, headed by Friar Martín de Valencia, indoctrinated the nobles and priests of the Triple Alliance through interpreters. In an extremely interesting document transcribed by Sahagun, the depth of the religious convictions of the nobles of the pre-Hispanic world can be perceived. The friars through their preaching, wanted to baptize them so that they would become examples to the common people. Astonished, the Indian nobles defended their religious principles:

> You say that those we worship are not gods. This manner of talking is very new to us and is very scandalous to us... because the forefathers who engendered and ruled us never told us any such thing; moreover... they instructed us in the way in which we had to honor them, and all the ceremonies and sacrifices that we perform... they have told us that we live and exist by means of this... they said that these gods which we worship give us all the things necessary to our bodily life: corn, beans, sage, etc. We ask them for rain so that the things on earth may grow... It would be a thing of folly and frivolity for us to destroy old laws and customs which the first settlers of this land left, who were the Chichimecs, the Tulan, those from Colhua, the Tepanecs, in the worship, faith and service of the aforementioned in which we were born and raised, and we are accustomed to these and we have them engraved in our hearts... It would be worthwhile to look at this affair with much deliberation and very slowly, dear sires: We are not satisfied nor are we persuaded by what has been told to us, nor do we understand nor give credence to what has been said to us about our gods. We trouble you, sires and fathers, talking in this manner. The nobles who have the duty of governing the realm and republics of this world are present. We all feel the same way: it is enough to have lost, it is enough that they have taken the power and royal jurisdiction from us. As far as our gods are concerend, we would rather die than give up serving and worshiping them. This is our will. Do what you

> wish. What is said suffices as a reply and contradiction to what you have told us. We have nothing else to say, dear sires.[18]

The priests could not deny their past, nor themselves. They were unwilling to destroy with their own hands everything which had been taken as good and true until then, and whose spokesman they were. From the beginning, they associated political autonomy with the ancestral religion, and were determined to die with their gods. But the friars did not yield before the stubborn sincerity of the Mexica intellectuals and continued expounding their doctrine until the nobles and priests finally accepted the lustral waters. Sahagun notes, at the end of *Coloquios,* that the Indian nobles became convinced and grateful for having been shown the road to salvation.

Nevertheless, even though the Franciscans believed in the sincerity of this conversion, accomplished between pleadings and threats during the first fifty years of Spanish government in New Spain, many priests and some Indian nobles who remained faithful to their ancestral deities were tried by the Inquisition. Among these, the most famous was Don Carlos Ometochtzin, son of Nezahualpilli and a protégé of Cortez, who had been carefully educated by the Franciscans and had therefore inherited the leadership of Tezcoco and the title ***Chichimecatecuhtli.***[19] Don Carlos was accused of idolatry and concubinage by his relatives who coveted his titles and possessions. From his trial one deduces that Chichimecatecuhtli wanted, in the name of the vernacular gods, to shake off the Spanish yoke. The ancestral deities were identified with the lordship and independence of the past. He told one Francisco, a relative of his:

> Let everyone live under the law he desires... look, brother... our forefathers were right in saying that the law that they observed had its beginning in heaven, and that the gods that they had, only they were the true ones and their law was good and true... Who are these that destroy, and perturb, and live dominating us, and we have them on our backs and they subjugate us? Well, here I am, and there is the lord of Mexico, Yoanitzin, and there is my nephew, Tetzcapilli, lord of Tacuba, and there is

[18] Sahagún, "El libro," pp. 128-130.

[19] Chichimecatecuhtli, "lord of the Chichimecs." This was a high rank in the army in the pre-Hispanic era. The Texcocans said they were descendents of the Chichimecs.

> Tlacahuepantli, lord of Tula. We are all equal and in agreement, and no one can be equal to us. This is our land, and our estate, and our jewels, and our possessions, and the lordship is ours and belongs to us. And these come here to command us and to subjugate us, being neither our relatives nor of our blood, and make themselves equal to us; well, here we are and there should be no one who makes fun of us.[20]

To be sure, Don Carlso Ometochtzin was as dangerous to secular as to spiritual power, which moreover were united. The bishop, Friar Juan de Zumárraga, who acted as Apostolic Inquisitor from 1535 to 1543, turned him over to the secular arm in 1539. The rebel Chichimecatecuhtli ended his days at the stake after six months of prison. His death was to have served as an example to those who wanted to follow him. Don Carlos was accused by the very ones he was supposed to lead in an eventual insurrection. It is well known that, only eighteen years after the conquest, the sons of the nobles, who were probably educated in the convents, were Hispanicized to such a degree that they lost their identity and collaborated in the establishment and consolidation of Spanish power in the Anahuac [valley of Mexico].

The tenacious persecution of the priesthood and the Hispanicization of the Indian nobility definitively erradicated the sophisticated religion of the pre-Hispanic world.

Coatlicue, mother of the gods, Huitzilopochtli, Tezcatlipoca, Quetzalcoatl, etc. died only to be reborn in the popular agricultural religion or to merge with one of the Christian saints. On the other hand, Indian religion and its expressions were, in the eyes of the friars, the work of the devil. Therefore, all religious expressions of the pagan world had to be destroyed. In fact, this was what was attempted. As Ricard states, the missionaries thought that there was no other means to build the Church in Mexico than by turning the ruins of the old pagan religions into a pedestal for it.[21] In the *Carta* which he sent to the participants in the Tolouse Assembly in 1532, the first bishop-elect of New Spain, Friar Juan de Zumárraga, writes:

[20] *Proceso criminal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición contra Don Carlos, indio principal de Tezcoco, 1539,* Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 2, file 2.

[21] Robert Ricard, *La conquista espiritual de México* (México: Jus, 1947), p. 114.

> By the hands of the friars of our Order of the Seraphic Father Saint Francis of the regular observance, more than two hundred and fifty thousand were baptized. And five hundred temples of idols, and more than twenty thousand demon figures have been destroyed. Those which they worshipped are smashed in pieces and burned. And in many places many oratories and chapels have already been built, and in many more the beautiful and very resplendent sign of the Holy Cross is raised and exalted. All of which is worshiped with much reverence by the Indians.[22]

On the other hand, Friar Motolinía, one of the original "twelve", wrote in 1536 that some friars "have baptized approximately three hundred thousand: others, two hundred thousand; others, one hundred and fifty thousand, and some comparatively fewer; so that, including those baptized by those now dead, some five million persons must have been baptized to date."[23]

The conquest of souls

After the conquest of Tenochtitlan, the Spanish were kept occupied in the organization of the new society, the reconstruction of the city, its buildings, etc., and were content with prohibiting the public performance of rituals, especially human sacrifices, which were proclaimed homicides. The moral support that the Indian satraps had given was taken away from the people when they most needed it: the recent loss of their autonomy, the total attack on all their religious and social values, the introduction of new sicknesses which produced frightening plagues, the constant demand for new tributes, and the fierce exploitation of Indian labor, which was the conquistador-encomendero's greatest economic asset from the very beginning. These circumstances facilitated the friars' evangelizing work which was begun in systematic fashion with the arrival of the twelve Franciscans. Conscious of and identifying with their mission, these friars profoundly impressed the demoralized masses of the Indian population.

[22] Fray Juan de Zumárraga, "Carta al capítulo de Tolosa," in *Don Fray Juan de Zumárraga*, Joaquín García Icazbalceta, vol. 2 (México: Porrúa, 1947), p. 304. This is the Latin translation by Father Isla. The text in Latin is on p. 300.

[23] Fray Toribio de Benavente or Motolinía, *Memoriales...*, ed. Edmundo O'Gorman (México: U.N.A.M., 1971), p. 122.

Voluntarily divested of all material ambitious, they pursued the salvation of souls as their only goal. They brought the Indians a spiritual consolation whose ritual demands were less rigorous than those of their ancestral deities. This motivated the Indians to come individually and in mass to receive the baptismal waters which, on the one hand, gave them moral support and, on the other, filled a void left by the prohibition of their vernacular rites, at the same time giving them a sense of belonging. By means of the lustral waters, the Indian incorporated himself into the new regime, identifying himself with the friars, whose austerity, poverty and humility contrasted with the conquistadors' rapacity and arrogance.

The Franciscans established themselves in the four main Indian settlements: Mexico, Texcoco, Huejotzingo and Tlaxcala. In 1562, twelve Dominicans and later twelve Augustinians arrived, each group in the image of the twelve apostles. With these and with all those who later came singly or in small groups, the evangelization spread through all the Bajío, Oaxaca, the Southeast and Northeast of the present Mexican republic.

The millions of American Indians were a challenge for the first missionaries, who wanted to establish the Church in the New World in accordance with the norms of primitive Christianity. There is no doubt that the assiduous reader of Thomas More, the Dominican Don Vasco de Quiroga, transcended the limits of the Renaissance and achieved in the New World, with his "towns-hospitals"— which José Miranda called "towns for the rigorous practice of fraternal life"— what European society considered a utopia.[24] The Augustinians had fruit trees brought from Castile, improved the cultivation of corn, and taught the Indians to plant wheat in the Tarascan zone. Friar Juan de San Miguel's work among the Indians of Uruapan was particularly noteworthy.[25]

But the reality that the friars faced was extremely problematic. There were many Indians and few friars. As far as the friars and the lay representatives of the Spanish Crown were concerned, they did not want to destroy the social stratification which had existed in the Indian society before the conquest. For this reason, schools were erected in the

[24] José Miranda, "La fraternidad cristiana y la labor social de la primitiva Iglesia mexicana," in *Vida colonial y albores de la independencia* (México: SepSetentas, 1972), p. 91.

[25] See Ricard, *Conquista espiritual*, p. 278 ff.

convents only for the children of nobles. The most famous of the schools was that of Santa Cruz, in the Santiago de Tlatelolco neighborhood. The students wrote in Castilian Spanish as well as in Ciceronian Latin. Nevertheless, the splendor of this school did not last more than some thirty years.

The friars used their students not only to indoctrinate, but also to completely transform and uproot the ancient cultures. We agree with Ricard that the clergy found their most loyal collaborators for their evangelizing work in the students and catechumens educated in the convents.[26] They helped the friars not only in preaching doctrine, but also in the destruction of the culture of their elders. To be sure, this occasionally loosened family ties and prompted sons to denounce their parents, although the cases we know about are limited to the nobility.

In fact, from the start, Cortez forced all nobles to turn their sons over to the friars for education.[27] Some important nobles, either from fear or imperviousness to what is new, sent the children of common people in place of their own. But they soon realized that they were making a mistake, since those educated in the convents inherited the chiefdoms and enjoyed special privileges. In turn, the encomenderos and royal officials used the chiefs in collecting tributes, while the clergy depended on them to win the people's compliance with the precepts of Christianity.

In the report that the Franciscans presented to the *visitador,* Juan de Ovando, in 1569, one reads:

> They attempt to assemble the sons of important people in schools, which are established for this purpose, where they learn to read and write and the other things... so that they become qualified to rule their towns and serve the churches, to which end it is not advantageous for the sons of workers and common people to be instructed, but rather they should only learn Christian doctrine and then, knowing it, should start from childhood to follow the work and activities of their fathers, to provide for themselves and help their republic, staying in the simplicity of their fathers. Such, not having been maintained among our

[26] Ibid., p. 211.

[27] "Ordenanzas de buen gobierno dadas por Hernán Cortés para los vecinos y moradores de la Nueva España, March 20, 1524, México-Tenochtitlan," in *Cartas y documentos,* Hernánd Cortés (México: Porrúa, 1963), pp. 351-2.

> old Christians, has been the reason that the government of the former Christian kingdoms and provinces is depraved and in confusion...[28]

In the last sentence of this passage one breathes the air of fear. Luther's reform, which revolutionized Christianity, even incited peasant rebellions such as the one which occurred in Germany — and led to the Counter-Reformation. For this reason, the healthiest thing is to keep the inhabitants of this New World in ignorance and passivity. The author of the *Informe* laments that previously "many sons of workers and lower-class people have been educated and qualified... they have risen to become elders, and it is they who rule in many towns..."[29] In order to prevent similar scandals, the Franciscan insists that it should not be allowed for "the sons of common folk to enter school nor learn to read, but rather only the sons of nobles."[30] This ban on teaching the common people to read and write indicates not only the effort to keep them submissive to the State and Church, but also the limits of the evangelization: that is, a greater concern for external cult than for internal faith. This was, likewise, one of the recommendations of the Council of Trent for handling the people.

On the other hand, boys educated in the convents were also excluded from the priesthood and could only fill the position of sexton. In addition, they were given servile jobs in the convents in order to ease the work of the always insufficient friars: "And they, however noble they may be... are esteemed for serving... in any job, as lowly as it may be, such as those of cooking and sweeping, etc; the virtue of humility and religious piety, so tied to Christ's law, should prevail most among those who take themselves to be true Christians."[31]

[28] "El orden que los religiosos tienen en enseñar a los indios de la *Doctrina*, y otras cosas de política cristiana," in *Relación particular y descripción de toda la provincia del Santo Evangelio, que es de la Orden de Sant Francisco en la Nueva España...*, in the *Códice franciscano* (México:Salvador Chávez Hayhoe, 1941),p.55.

[29] Ibid.,p.56.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.,p.57.

The Minors

In the orders of Don Juan de Zumárraga, the first bishop of Mexico, who had the *Doctrina Breve* printed, as translated into Nahuatl by Father Alfonso de Molina, it is stipulated that the children of the popular classes and the people in general should only know the essential part of the Doctrina: Per signum crucis, the Pater noster, Ave María, Credus, Salve regina, the fourteen Articles of Faith, the Ten Commandments of God and the five of the Church, the seven Sacraments, the seven mortal sins and the general confession. They should know all this by heart when it is required of them. But, with regard to those who have not been able to memorize the text of the doctrine, "the ministers will be content if they know how to cross themselves and say the Parter noster and the Ave regina, and if they confess the Articles of Faith..."[32]

The children of the common people were picked up in their neighborhoods by specially designated elders and taken to the Church's patio to learn to recite the text of the essential *Doctrina* from memory. In this manner, the "tribunes and centurians" chosen for this purpose were brought to town on Sundays and holidays to sing mass and listen to the sermon. Roll was called in the temple and those who were missing without justification were whipped: "and this is the form of punishment that they have and have always had, even though it be in trivial things... and whoever should take this away from them, in the temporal government as in the spiritual one, will do nothing but take away all their being and the means to govern themselves, because they are like children..."[33]

In fact, the clergy considered the Indians as minors from the very start and did nothing to change them into adult men. Instead, since the clergy wanted to protect them from the vices of the old Christians, given to avarice and carnality, as well as from being exploited, they used paternalistic policies toward them. In this the clergy was helped by the usual Hispanic segregation, which divided the medieval city into Jewish, Moorish and Christian neighborhoods. This segregation was established in Tenochtitlan when the Spanish city was separated

[32] "*Doctrina cristiana breve* traducida en lengua mexicana por el Padre Fray Alonso de Molina de la Orden de los Menores... por mandato del Rmo. Señor Don Fray Juan de Zumárraga...1546, a 20 de junio...", in *Códice franciscano*, p. 54.

[33] Ibid., p. 59.

from the Indian neighborhoods, thus isolating them from the Europeans. Spaniards were prohibited from entering Indian congregations.

Nevertheless, this procedure was also inspired by the desire to implant a theocratic government in the congregations, and by the friars' desire to be the only intermediaries between the Indian and the bishop, and between the Indian and the Spanish Crown. For this reason, they refused to Hispanicize the Indian. In turn, evangelization was carried out thanks only to the fact that the friars began the arduous task of learning different Indian languages, to translate the *Doctrina* into them, and to compose grammars and dictionaries. In order to facilitate their evangelizing work, they began to spread the Nahuatl language, which survived in various regions as a residue of the Mexica empire. According to Friar Rodrigo de la Cruz: "It is a very elegant language, just as any other in the world, and it has vocabulary made into *artes,* and many things of the Holy Scriptures are translated into it, and many collections of sermons, and there are friars who speak them well."[34] In fact, "the general language of the Indians" was spoken around 1584 from Zacatecas to Nicaragua.[35]

The Crown was not hostile to the teaching of Indian languages, but insisted on the learning of Spanish, especially from the end of the sixteenth century.[36] The clergy did not obey the respective royal documents, and constructed a linguistic wall which, on the one hand, gave them more power over the Indians and, on the other, marked the division between whites and Indians. Thus the policy of the Crown was contradictory, for while it demanded the Hispanicization of the Indians, it isolated them. Both attitudes were inspired by the good will of the monarch, who sought a way to convert the Indians into direct vassals of the Crown, capable of dealing with and defending themselves from royal officials and others. On the other hand, he wanted to protect them from the abuses of the Spaniards and mestizos. In addition, the King had been influenced by Indian-loving friars who feared— as expressed by Father Mendieta, the great

[34] Mariano Cuevas, *Historia de la Iglesia en México,* vol. 1 (México: Patria, 1927),p.40.

[35] Ricard, *Conquista espiritual,* p. 137.

[36] Magnus Mörner, "La difusión del castellano y el aislamiento de los indios: Dos aspiraciones contradictorias de la Corona española." in *Homenaje a Jaime Vicens Vives,* vol. 2 (Barcelona, 1967), pp. 435-446.

spokesman of the Franciscans— that the evangelization would be affected, because the Indians could come to identify Christianity with the Spanish lifestyle:

> No one doubts that the Indians; having seen and seeing (as they do every day) many Spaniards with bad lifestyles and customs— who, without observance of any charitableness or neighborliness and without any reason, set the dogs on them and mistreat them, and take their daughters and wives from them, and forcibly take away what they have, and perpetrate other insults of that sort— and seeing that the likes of such are called Christians, the Indian would rightly and justly say: "If you call these Christians, living as they live and doing what they do, I want to be an Indian, as you call me, and I do not want to be a Christian."[37]

To summarize, the Crown's policy in both cases did not achieve its aim: the Indians were not Hispanicized and the mestizo population grew progressively during the colonial period.

The silent resistance

Religious life, insofar as its external manifestations are concerned, was controlled by roll calls in churches on Sundays and holidays, and by physical punishment which the friars administered according to their judgement and religious zeal. In turn, the external cult was quite attractive to the common people, whose only pastimes were, in fact, the religious festivals. In order to make the religious cult more attractive and familiar to the Indians, several friars, such as Pedro de Gante, introduced singing and music, elements used in pre-Hispanic festivals. Religious theater, especially at Holy Week, Christmas and other celebrations, was also instituted early.

Nevertheless, Friar Diego Durán of the Order of Saint Dominic who wrote around the eighth decade of the sixteenth century, tells that the Indians celebrated the festival of the saint of their town or neighborhood on the same day on which, according to their ancient calendar, they had held the celebration of its patron god. For this

[37] Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, vol. 3 pp. 164-5.

reason, they made all the calendar correlations before hand and were very meticulous in choosing their patron saint.[38]

Friar Bernardino de Sahagún pointed out the same thing, perhaps some fifteen or twenty years earlier and, moreover, denounced that "we do not know what it is they have hidden inside the hollows or cavity of the images they carry on the plataform when they make a procession".[39]

According to the *Tratado de Idolatrías,* composed around 1580 by the *bachiller* and parish priest of the town of Atenango (near Taxco, Guerrero), Hernando Ruíz de Alarcón, as well as a work of the same name written by Dr. Jacinto de la Serna, priest of the *Sagrario Metropolitano* and published in 1630 in Mexico City, to mention only the most important authors on this theme, before going to church the Indians had already made ritual offerings and burnt incense to domestic deities or elements or personified nature: "most sacrifices of these Indians started immediately after midnight, or shortly thereafter, or at daybreak, and in the same way they do all the things to their saints, in order to make them conform to their idolatric ceremonies. Before the day started and they went to church, their superstitions were already performed."[40] De la Serna warns the clergy that the roses which are offered to Saint Francis in October might be dedicated to Xochiquetzal. Father Durán and other clergy had previously denounced the same thing.

Festivities had a double meaning, especially in September, when floral and even food offerings supposedly destined to the Virgin were also destined to Chicomecoatl, goddess of the harvest, to Toci, the grandmother and mother of the gods, or to Teteo Inan. The latter, under the name *Tonantzin* and also "Our Lady of Sustenance," has her celebration in December. Her cult was the basis of the veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe. More extensive information on this subject is to be found in the excellent book written by Francisco de la Maza, *El guadalupismo mexicano,* in which he points out the

[38] Fray Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de la Nueva España e islas de Tierra Firme,* vol. 2 (México:Nacional,1951),pp.226-7.

[39] Joaquín García Icazbalceta, *Bibliografía mexicana del siglo XVI* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1954),p. 380.

[40] Hernando Ruíz de Alarcón, *Tratado de las idolatrías...* (México: Navarro, 1948-1952); Jacinto de la Serna, *Tratado de las idolatrías...* (México: Navarro, 1948),p.143.

syncretism of Tonantzin and the Virgin of Guadalupe of Extremadura in the Dark Virgin.[41]

Her appearance was denied by the mendicant orders of the sixteenth century and especially by Friar Bernardino de Sahagún, who denounced that "in this city of Mexico, on the spot where Holy Mary of Guadalupe is located an idol was worshiped which formerly was called Tonantzin, and with this same name they now call Our Lady the Virgin Mary, saying that they are going to Tonantzin, or that they are making a celebration for Tonantzin, meaning the ancient and not the modern one"[42] Nevertheless, the secular clergy kept quiet in this matter. In the seventeenth century, the Dark Virgin was passionately defended by the creole intelectuals, who saw in her the symbol of something new, the emergence of Mexico.

The Virgin of Tepeyac is an Indian contribution to imported Christianity, and even though she was venerated for different motives at the beginning, with the passing of time she was transformed into the unifying nucleus of both: into the symbol for *mestizaje* and, at the same time, into the standard of Mexican-born Spaniards. Creoles no longer had a need for imported images, since they had their own patroness and protector. In his book de la Maza reproduces a colonial painting which portrays the Virgin mounted on an eagle that devours a serpent and is poised on top of a cactus, a symbol closely tied to the god Huitzilopochtli and to the founding of the city of Mexico— Tenochtitlan[43] This symbol is also the emblem of the national flag of an independent Mexico. Moreover, it is well known that the Virgin standing on the Tepeyac hill, gave a cloak to the Indian, Juan Diego, as a testimony of her appearance, and that Coatlicue, mother of the tutelary god of the Mexica, Huitzilopochtli, sent Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina a cloak and a piece of clothing made of sisal, from her dwelling on Coatepec hill, as a signal that she was still alive. The ruler of Tenochtitlan, after seeing the objects, deposited them in the temple of Huitzilopochtli.[44]

The appearance of Tonantzin, the mother of the gods and the earth, the great protectress of the Indians, before the Indian Juan

[41] Francisco de la Maza, *El guadalupanismo mexicano* (México: Porrúa y Obregón, 1953).

[42] Icazbalceta, *Bibliografía*, p.381.

[43] Maza, *El guadalupismo mexicano*, illus. 7; Chimalpahin, *Relaciones de Chalco Amaquemacan* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965), pp. 54-6.

[44] Durán, *Historia de las Indias*, vol. 1, pp. 219-228.

Diego, in the clothing of the Virgin, clearly implied that Christianity was establishing itself in Mexico by divine will and not by the conquistadors' weapons.[45] In fact, in this present year a new basilica has been built to the image of the Lady of Tepeyac, in which Juan Diego's cloak (?) is still being worshiped by thousands of Mexicans. According to legend, the Virgin appeared to Juan Diego from the ninth to the twelth of December 1531. Nine years later the statue representing Oztocteotl, the god of the cave in the Chalma sanctuary near Toluca, was found substituted miraculously by a life-size crucifix on the morning of May 8, according to one tradition, and on September 29, according to another. To be sure, in the same year the Augustinian friars attacked the pagan customs with great religious zeal in Ocuila, where the sanctuary is found. The priest for Oztocteotl was severely reprimanded and the friars found a large number of idols which were worshiped in caves.[46] The Mexican anthropologist Miguel Othón de Mendizabal wrote, in the forties of this century, that one admired "the courage of the intrepid friars, who with due caution, surely protected by the night's shadows, ventured forth from their convent to the cave along the precipices of the hostile gorge, with the heavy crucifix on their back, so as to incline the aborigines' soul toward Christianity with the innocent fiction of divine intervention."[47] We would like to think that it was the Indian priests, Ollin and Acatonal (the latter fled from inquisitorial persecution), who had the idea of placing the crucifix there so as to be able to continue worshipping the old god of the cave or the cave gods in general. Be it as it may, the "miracle" has been well consecrated through the unbreakable devotion of almost four centuries, and the sanctuary of Our Lord of Chalma is the second most important in the Mexican altiplano. For worldly things, the Indians went to their traditional gods throughtout the colonial period, and in some cases, influenced Spaniards with their beliefs. For example, in 1614, the encomendero Juan Vela Aguirre was accused before the Commissioner of Campeche of having "eaten from what

[45] Profesor Jacques Lafaye recently published a magnificent work entitled *Quetzalcóatl et Guadalupe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), with an English edition by the University of Chicago Press, 1976.

[46] *Fragmento de una causa contra los indios de Ocuila por idólatras, 1540*, Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 2, p. 515.

[47] Miguel Othón de Mendizábal "El santuario de Chalma", in *Obras completas*, ed. Carmen de Mendizábal, vol. 2 (México, 1946), p. 515.

some heathens were offering to the devil, and he joined them in their ceremonies."[48] In 1672, in Orizaba, the Spaniard Leonor de Torres was accused of idolatry in the company of the Indian, Francisco.[49] In 1696 the bachiller Don Manuel Caballero, presbyter, induced "an Indian to use sorcery" by means of which the Spaniard thought to get the favors of a lady.[50] In 1705, the inquisitor tried Juan González, a Spaniard from the town of Totonicapan (the present state of Hidalgo), for practicing idolatry and sorcery in the company of María de Barrios, a mestiza, and some Indians.[51] In 1770, sanctuaries with idols and offerings were discovered on hilltops in several towns around Tulancingo. Some Indians, their "masters of idols" and two Spaniards, the brothers Manuel and Joseph Gómez, were tried. Manuel was major in the town of San Agustín Tenango of the bishopric of Puebla; Joseph had a ranch there too and was married to an Indian. The latter was surprised in his cornfield in Tenango in the company of some Indians "worshiping idols in a dark spot with a pot of tamales, some colored papers the size of a half sheet, whose utilization is called 'paying the woods, land, air and water what is owed them, so that they do not do any harm to people.' The Spaniard defended himself before the ministers of the Holy Office, saying that he had made these offerings "only to see if he would get his boy's health back... who had an abscess in the kidneys."[52]

Among the beliefs about the supernatural, *nahualism* is still alive. We will not attempt to go into this in detail here, we only want to present some examples to indicate its survival. In the pre-Hispanic era it was

[48] *Carta del comisario de Campeche, denunciando a Juan Vela y Aguirre, por haber estado con unos idólatras cuando sacrificaban ... a sus dioses; Campeche, 1614,* Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 302, file 17b, ff. 280-287; and Eva A. Uchmany, "Cuatro casos de idolatría en el area maya ante el Tribunal de la Inquisición," *Estudios de cultura maya* 6(1967): 275-9.

[49] *Autos contra Leonor de Torres, española, por idolatrías: Orizaba, 1672,* Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 518, ff. 191-197.

[50] *El señor Inquisidor contra el Br. D. Manuel Caballero, por supersticiones, 1699,* Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 697, file 30, ff. 313-319.

[51] *El Sr. Inquisidor contra Juan González, español, and María de Barrios, mestiza, por idolatrías; Totonicapan, 1705,* Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 729, file 22, ff. 502-528.

[52] *El Sr. Fiscl del S.O contra Joseph y Manuel Gómez, españoles, por idolatrías; Tulancingo, 1770,* Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 1149, file 24, ff. 80-116.

believed that men had a double in the form of some animal, or *nahual,* which was like a companion or guardian of the spirit. For example, the god Quetzalcoatl had a nahual who helped him gather the precious bones of the humans who passed on to the underworld.[53] Of course, being a god as he was, he had the ability to change into an animal. Even certain men had this power to change themselves, preferably, into the animal of the type of their nahual. King Tzutzumatzin from Coyoacan, who lived toward the end of the fifteenth century, had the power to turn into different animals, especially into a jaguar.[54] In 1614, Pablo, an Indian from Ixmiquilpan, who was a nahual transformed himself into a jaguar. According to his statements, when he took the shape of a feline, he went to a better world, to a very delightful land where better delicacies were eaten than in this land.[55] In 1621, Juana Isabel, an Indian from the Santiago de Tlatelolco neighborhood, was accused of witchcraft, for having changed into a dog.[56] A similar accusation was made in 1624, against an Indian from the Zimapan mines. When he went to visit some friends, he was transformed into a jaguar.[57] In 1672 an Indian nahual in Tulancingo was accused.[58] One hundred years later, and Indian was tried in the same place for a similar offense.[59] Finally, we are informed that in present-day Mízquiq, a town near the city of Mexico, there lives a man who is "one of the bad" nahuals and can change into a dog, coyote, cat, lamp post, pig, and other animals and objects, to do harm to his enemies or to live at the expense of good men.[60]

[53] "Leyenda de los soles," in *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* (México: UNAM, 1945), p. 120.

[54] Durán, *Historia de las Indias,* vol. 1, p. 384.

[55] *Denuncia contra Pablo, indio, por nahual: Ixmiquilpan, 1614,* Inquisition branch, Archivo Genral de la Nación, vol. 303, f. 70.

[56] *Testificación contra Juana Isabel, india, por brujerías,* Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 486, file 85, ff. 451-458.

[57] *Testificación contra un indio nahual de las minas de Zimapan, 1624,* Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 303, f. 69.

[58] *Información contra Antonio Núñez y Joseph Santiago, mulatos por haber azotado a un indio acusándolo de brujo; Tulancingo, 1672,* Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 517, ff. 560-598.

[59] *Testimonios de indios en el proceso contra José y Manuel Gómez: Tulancingo, 1672,* Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 517, ff. 560-598.

[60] Jesús Angel Ochoa Zazueta, *La muerte y los muertos...* (México: SepSetentas, 1974), p. 78.

Nahualism is related to the rain cult. Pablo the Indian, when he took the shape of a jaguar (the god of rain was, himself, feline) and moved to a place of pleasures, went to Tlalocan, the worldly paradise of the rain god, Tlaloc.

In fact, nahuals occasionally acted as rainmakers and hailmakers.[61] The nahaual, Manuel Mixpan, followed this trade in 1769 in Mízquiq.[62] And finally, last year, in 1975, around the month of May, a note appeared in the newspaper *Excelsior* about some rainmaking ceremonies in Tabasco.

Briefly, popular religion in the Mexican altiplano, as in the whole country, is imbued with the presence of the past. The interesting study carried out by William Madsen, in 1952 in the town of San Francisco Tecospa, Milpa Alta precinct, near Mexico City, and other recent research indicate that the spiritual conquest did not achieve the goals it sought. Instead, it gave birth to a religious syncretism which Madsen prefers to call Christo-paganism.[63]

Conclusion

The complicated and sophisticated sacerdotal religion in the Mexican altiplano rapidly disappeared with the conquest. The Indians tried by the early Inquisition of New Spain were, in general, important men and priests. The latter put up the strongest resistance to the new religion and were, therefore, the most persecuted. Degraded to the level of witches, nahuals, shamans and others, they continued to compete in the dark of night with the friars and parish priests during the whole colonial period.

In the pre-Hispanic era, the satraps and rulers gave mutual support to each other in their functions and formed the intellectual elite in their own areas. The Spaniards were able to separate the nobility from the priesthood, which together were the champions of Mexican

[61] Uchmany, "Cuatro casos," pp. 267-300; and also "De algunos llamadores de lluvia en Mesoamérica," in *Las fronteras de Mesoamérica*, vol. 2 (México: Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, 1976), pp. 341-351.

[62] *El fiscal del S.O. contra Manuel Mixton, por idólatra*, Inquisition branch, Archivo General de la Nación, vol. 1055.

[63] William Madsen, "Christo-Paganism: A Study of Mexican Religious Syncretism," in *Nativism and Syncretism* (New Orleans; Middle American Research Institute, 1960), pp. 105-179.

independence during the conquest of Tenochtitlan. The important men who survived the hecatomb, insofar as they endangered the newborn Spanish government, were eliminated and substituted by others, and, insofar as they owed the Spanish their power and dignity, they were subjugated. These and their descedents were the first ones to become thoroughly Hispanicized, and became devout and sincere Christians. The Spanish Crown distinguished them as social pillars and granted them various privileges: they placed the title of "Don" before their names; dressed in the Spanish fashion; carried a sword and rode on horseback; and when the opportunity presented itself to marry Spanish women, they did not let it slip by. Nevertheless, many other chiefs were excluded from all these benefits and shared the fate of the common people, occasionally collaborating with priests in the prohibited, pagan rites.

In the beginning, the common folk who worked the corn-fields came in flocks to receive the baptismal waters and later learned to recite the basic *Doctrina* from memory.[64] But due partly to the lack of clergy and partly to the idea that it was better for the masses to remain in their simple-mindedness, they did not understand Christianity in depth. Although many were able to penetrate the mysteries of the faith and believed in spiritual salvation, when it came to meeting their everyday needs they continued to invoke old deities invested with the attributes of European saints. This attitude was reinforced by the impact and consequences of the conquest: in the beginning, slavery and forced labor, and plagues to boot. Religious orders, each one in its own way, on the one hand, tried to reconcile the Indians to Spanish rule and, on the other, fought within the existing system to better their condition.

In the face of such an ambiguous situation, the attitude of many Indians towards Christianity was also ambiguous. Father Durán, when reproaching an Indian for this attitude, received an extremely interesting answer:

[64] Friar Pedro de Gante wrote, in 1529, in a letter sent to his religious brothers in Flanders, that: "In this province of Mexico I, with another companion, have baptized more than two hundred thousand, and so many that I myself do not know the number. Frequently, it happens that we baptize fourteen thousand people in one day" (García Icazbalceta, *Bibliografía,* p. 109). Father Motolinía, who, according to his own words, wrote these lines in 1536, informs us that: "up until today there must be nearly five million baptized." This figure only refers to the altiplano. See *Memoriales o Libro de las cosas de la Nueva España y de los naturales de ella* (México: UNAM, 1972), p. 122.

> "Father, do not be frightened because we are still *nepantla.*" In order to understand what he meant by that word and metaphor, which means "to be in the middle," I insisted again that he tell me what was that "middle" in which they were. He told me that since they were still not rooted in the faith, I should not be frightened that they were still neutral, that they did not totally resort to either the one law nor the other, or, in other words, that they believed in God and that, at the same time, they resorted to their ancient customs and rites of the devil, and this is what he meant by his abominable excuse that they still remained neutral.[65]

In fact, in the beginning the Indian accepted Jesus Christ as another god in their pantheon. This attitude also meant political-religious submission before Spanish sovereignty. Compelled by the coercion of a monotheist religion which demanded exclusiveness, they resorted to dissimulation: in place of sacrificing men, they sacrificed hens, quail and other fowl; they placed idols inside the saints, statues, etc.

It is obvious that the generation of evangelizing friars, though extraordinary men, did not succeed in erradicating in fifty years the thousands of years of pagan beliefs. But their successors who arrived in the second half of the sixteenth century belonged to the theological clergy who appeared in Spain during and after the Council of Trent. They attempted to build a Spanish Church instead of a Primitive Church in Mexico, and transformed the Indians from brothers into subjects. Supported by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the metropolis and of New Spain (archbishop Montúfar), they thought that education and instruction might lead the Indians toward heresy, and maintained them at a minimum. Toward the end of the century, the seminary of Santiago de Tlatelolco was in ruins.

All these circumstances propitiated *nepantlismo* and dissimulation which, at a popular level, evolved into a kind of syncretism which the tradition of centuries consecrated.

[65] Durán, *Historia de las Indias*, vol. 2, p. 268.

Bibliography

Documents from the Archivo General de la Nación, Inquisition branch

1539 *Proceso criminal del S.O. de la Inquisición contra Don Carlos, indio principal de Tezcoco*, vol. 2, file 2.

1540 *Fragmento de una causa contra los indios de Ocuila por idolatría*, vol. 1, file 6.

1614 *Denuncia contra Pablo, indio, por nahual; Ixmiquilpan*, vol. 303, f. 70.

1614 *Carta del comisario de Campeche, denunciando a Juan Vela y Aguirre, por haber estado con unos idólatras cuando y haber comido de lo que ofrecían a sus dioses*, vol. 302, file 17b, ff. 280-287.

1621 *Testificación contra Juana Isabel, india, por brujerías; Tlatelolco*, vol. 486, file 85, ff. 451-458.

1624 *Testificación contra un indio nahual de las minas de Zimapan*, vol. 303, f. 69.

1624 *Carta del Dr. Ruíz de Alarcón describiendo supersticiones de indios.*

1672 *Información contra Antonio Núñez y Joseph Santiago, mulatos, por haber azotado a un indio acusándolo de brujo; Tulancingo*, vol. 517, ff. 560-598.

1696 *El Señor Inquisidor contra el Br. D. Manuel Caballero, por supersticiones*, vol. 697, file 30, ff. 313-319.

1705 *El señor Inquisidor contra Juan González, español, y María de Barrios, mestiza, por idolatrías; Totonicapan*, vol. 729, file 22, ff. 502-528.

1769 *El fiscal del S. O. contra Manuel Mixton, por idolatrías; Mizquic*, vol. 1055.

1770 *El señor fiscal del S. O. contra Joseph y Manuel Gómez, españoles, por idolatrías; Tulancingo*, vol. 1149, file. 24.

Sixteenth and seventeenth centuries chronicles

Anales de Cuauhtitlan. Translated by Primo Feliciano Velázquez. México: UNAM, 1945.

Casas, Fray Bartolomé de las. *Tratados*. Translated by Agustín Millares Carlo and Rafael Moreno. 2 vols. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965.

Chimalpahin Cuauhtlehuanitzin, Francisco de San Antón Muñón. *Relaciones originales de Chalco Amaquemacan*. Translated by Silvia Rendón. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965.

Códice franciscano. Edited by Joaquín García Icazbalceta. México: Salvador Chávez Hayhoe, 1941.

Cortés, Hernán. *Cartas y documentos*. Edited by Mario Hernández Sánchez-Barba. México: Porrúa, 1963.

Díaz del Castillo, Bernal. *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*. 2 vols. México: Porrúa, 1960.

Durán, Fray Diego de. *Historia de las Indias de la Nueva España e islas Tierra Firme*. 2 vols. México: Editora Nacional, 1951.

Gante, Fray Pedro de. *Carta ... a los padres y hermanos en Flandes*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1954.

Landa, Fray Diego de. *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*. México: Porrúa, 1959.

López de Gómara, Francisco. *Historia general de las Indias*. 2 vols. Barcelona: Iberia, 1954.

Mendieta, Fray Jerónimo de. *Historia eclesiástica indiana*. Edited by Joaquín García Icazbalceta. México: Salvador Chávez Hayhoe, 1945.

Motolinia, Fray Toribio de Benavente. *Memoriales o Libro de las cosas de la Nueva España de los naturales de ella*. Edited by Edmundo O'Gorman. México: UNAM, 1971.

Oviedo, Gonzalo Fernández de. *Historia general y natural de las Indias, islas y Tierra Firme del mar océano*. 2 vols. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1851.

Ruíz de Alarcón, Hernando. *Tratado de las idolatrías, supersticiones, dioses, ritos, hechicerías y otras costumbres gentilicias de las razas aborígenes de México.* México: Navarro, 1948-52.

Sahagún, Fray Bernardino de. *Prólogo...* In Joaquín García Icazbalceta. *Bibliografía mexicana del siglo XVI.* México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1954, pp. 376-387.

_____. *El libro de las pláticas o Coloquios de los doce primeros misioneros de México.* Translated by Celia Nuttal. In *Revista mexicana de estudios históricos,* 1, 6 (November December 1927) 101-141.

Serna, Jacinto de la. *Tratado de las idolatrías, supersticiones, ritos, hechicerías y otras costumbres gentilicias de las razas aborígenes de México.* México: Navarro, 1948-52.

Tapia, Andrés de. *Relación hecha por el señor... sobre la conquista de México.* In *Colección de documentos para la historia de México.* Edited by Joaquín García Icazbalceta. vol. 2. México: Porrúa, 1971, pp. 554-594.

Zumárraga, Fray Juan de. *Carta al capítulo de Tolosa, 1532.* In Joaquín García Icazbalceta. *Don Fray Juan de Zumárraga.* vol. 2. México: Porrúa, 1947, pp. 300-308.

Modern Studies

Castro, Américo. *La realidad histórica de España.* México: Porrúa, 1966.

Cuevas, Mariano. *Historia de la Iglesia en México.* 5 vols. México: Patria, 1927.

García Icazbalceta, Joaquín. *Bibliografía mexicana del siglo XVI.* Edited by Agustín Millares Carlo. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1954.

Lafaye, Jacques. *Quetzalcoatl et Guadalupe.* Paris: Gallimard, 1974.

Maza, Francisco de la. *El guadalupismo mexicano.* México: Porrúa y Obregón, 1953.

Mendizábal, Miguel Othón de. *Obras completas.* Edited by Carmen de Mendizábal. 2 vols. México, 1946.

Madsen, William. "Christo-Paganism: A Study of Mexican Religious Syncretism." In *Nativism and Syncretism.* New Orleans: Middle American Research Institute, 1960, pp. 105-179.

Miranda, José. *Vida colonial y albores de la independencia.* México: SepSetentas, 1972.

Mörner, Magnus. "La difusión del castellano y el aislamiento de los indios: Dos aspiraciones contradictorias de la Corona española." In *Homenaje a Jaime Vicens Vives.* vol. 2. Barcelona: 1967, pp. 435-436.

Ochoa Zazueta, Jesús Angel. *La muerte y los muertos: Culto, servicio, ofrenda y humor de una comunidad.* México: SepSetentas, 1974.

Phelan, John L. *El reino milenario de los franciscanos en el Nuevo Mundo.* México: UNAM, 1972.

Richard, Robert. *La conquista espiritual de México.* México: Jus, 1947.

Uchmany, Eva A. "Cuatro casos de idolatría en el area maya ante el Tribunal de la Inquisición." *Estudios de cultura maya* 6(1967): 267-300.

_____. "De algunos llamadores de lluvia en Mesoamérica." In *Las fronteras de Mesoamérica.* vol. 2. México: Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, 1976, pp. 341-351.

_____. *Motecuhzoma II Xocoyotzin y la conquista de México.* México: INJUVE, 1972.

The Philippine Experience Under Spain: Christianization as Social Change

Rosario Mendoza Cortés

Geographically, the Philippines belongs to Southeast Asia. Racially its people are of the same southern Mongoloid extraction as those of that region. But while its neighbors are either Islamic or Buddhist societies, the Philippines is predominantly Christian. The former are known by indigenous names: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Except for Thailand, all of them, like the Philippines, had a colonial experience. But among the countries of Southeast Asia, only the Philippines carries a Hispanized name —preferring to retain the name given it four centuries ago in honor of Philip II of Spain. This is no mere accident of history. Culturally speaking, the Philippines is an extension of Hispanic America, separated though it may be by the vast Pacific Ocean.

The links between the Philippines and Mexico cannot be overlooked. Mexico was the springboard from which Spain's ventures into the Pacific were launched. The expedition of Miguel López de Legazpi, which finally succeeded in colonizing the Philippines, set sail from Navidad, Mexico in 1564.[1] And thereafter, for about two hundred and fifty years, the Philippines was governed as a *gobierno* of the *Audiencia* of Mexico.[2] Priests and missionaries destined for the Philippines from Spain first made the crossing of the Atlantic to Mexico and, after a year's stay in Mexico, embarked on the trip across the Pacific.[3] While many of the Spanish governors sent to the Philippines were military men, just as many were good bureaucrats or lawyers who had distinguished themselves as members of American audiencias. Some governors came directly from Spain and

[1] "Account of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, in *The Philippine Islands: 1498-1898*, ed. and trans. Emma Helen Blair and James A. Robertson, 51 vols. (Cleveland, Ohio, 1905), 2:196-206. Hereafter cited as *PI*.

[2] *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias, 1791*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Consejo de la Hispanidad, 1943), 2:115 [Book 5, Title 2]. Hereafter cited as *Recopilación*.

[3] Joaquin Martínez de Zúñiga, *Estadismo de las Islas Filipinas en 1800*, ed. W.E. Retana, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1893), 1:512.

looked upon the Philippines as a stepping stone to more prestigious and lucrative posts in Mexico and Peru.[4] Thus, Mexican and Philippine colonial histories have been intimately related.

Most writers are now agreed that the principal motive for the initial steps taken to occupy the archipielago was economic, and that the goal of Christianizing the natives was only secondary.[5] Whatever were the real motives of the Spanish conquest, the set of sealed instructions handed to Legazpi when he left Mexico on his epoch-making voyage left no doubt as to one of its aims. It included the command "to work for the evangelization of the natives."[6] We shall therefore initially define the term Christianization as the conversion of the Filipinos to the Roman Catholic faith, specifically, Spanish Roman Catholicism. And we shall use the term *conversion,* as defined in Professor McLeod's paper, to mean the change of allegiance from one set of beliefs to another. In the end, this was the only goal that proved realizable. It is to Spain's credit that Philip II refused to give up the missionary enterprise when the colony later proved to be unproductive. Proposals were repeatedly made to abandon the colony, but it was the religious motive of retaining the islands for the Catholic faith that influenced Philip II.[7] Thus, today, the Philippines stands as an outpost of Christianity in the Far East. About eighty percent of the population today are baptized Roman Catholics.

In the acculturation of the native society to the Hispanic brand of Christianity, the regular clergy of the Spanish Catholic Church were the main protagonists. Not having at hand a missionary organization capable of entering distant lands and supporting itself by its own resources, the papacy had entrusted to the Spanish Crown the administration of the new Church of the Indies. In turn, the Crown had entrusted to the regular clergy the specific task of Christianizing the natives. With their higher standards of discipline and asceticism, the members of the religious orders were deemed better prepared for missionary work than were the members of the secular clergy.[8] Those regular orders who participated in the religous conquest

[4] Nicolas P. Cushner, S.J., *Spain in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1971), 154-55; also Onofre D. Corpuz, *The Bureaucracy in the Philippines* (Manila, 1957).

[5] Corpuz, *Bureaucracy*, p. 40; also, John L. Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines* (Madison, 1959), p. 7.

[6] "Instructions to Legazpi by the President and Auditors of Royal Audiencia: Mexico, Sept. 1, 1564," in *PI.* 2:89.

[7] Cushner, *Spain*, p. 40.

[8] Phelan, *Hispanization*, p. 31.

of the archipelago were the Augustinians, the first of whom arrived with Legazpi in 1565, the Discalced Franciscans who came in 1578, the Jesuits in 1581, the Dominicans in 1587, and the Augustinian Recollects in 1606.

The archipelago was divided into four main spheres of missionary activity.[9] All the religious orders retained houses in and around Manila, but, in addition, each was assigned a definite area to evangelize. The Augustinians retained their mission in Cebu and Panay and, in addition, were given central Luzon, the Tagalog religion, and the Ilocos region; the Franciscans had the southern Tagalog region and the Bicol region in southern Luzon; the Jesuits were assignd to the Visayan Islands between Luzon in the north and Mindanao to the south; while the Dominicans were given Pangasinan and the Cagayan region of northern Luzon.

The Recollects, who came last, were given the Mindanao region and isolated areas of Luzon and the Visayas not convered by the other orders.[10]

The principal handicap to the missionary undertaking was the constant shortage of personnel. The clergy had to be brought all the way from Spain and the expense involved was quite enormous. To send one Jesuit from Spain to the Philippines, it cost the Crown the tidy sum of 129,526 maravedis.[11] In 1595, three decades after Legazpi's arrival, there were only 134 religious personnel in the archipielago working among a dispersed population of five hundred thousand.[12] Throughout the regime, the number of religious workers varied between 254 and 400.[13] But the number was never adequate. The problem was compounded by the rural decentralization of the population. It was physically impossible for a few hundred missionaries to reach all the numerous, tiny, isolated pockets of inhabitants. As in Mexico and Peru, the strategy adopted was to persuade the natives to settle in compact villages. Earlier, the king had ordered that the natives be resettled in *poblaciones* in order "to instruct them in the holy

[9] *Recopilación*, [Book 1, Title 15, Law 32].

[10] Each of the religious orders have their historians. Among these are Gaspar de San Agustín, O.S.A., *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas* (Madrid, 1698); Juan Francisco de San Antonio, O.F.M., *Chronicas* (1783); Pedro Chirino, S.J., *Relación de las Islas Filipinas* (1603); Diego de Aduarte, O.P., *Historia de la provincia del Sancto Rosario* (1640); and Juan de la Concepción, O.R.S.A., *Historia general de Filipinas* (1792).

[11] Cushner, *Spain*, p. 76.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Phelan, *Hispanization*.

faith... and live in a civilized manner."[14] To carry out this task, civil and ecclesiastical personnel were enjoined to cooperate.

In Mexico and Peru, Church and State had acquired considerable experience in resettling the Indians. The lessons acquired were profitably applied in the Philippines. An ambitious program of resettling the Filipinos into compact villages of 400 to 700 families was laid out in the 1580's and 1590's.[15] The largest settlements became the nuclei of the earliest pueblos. The main mission was set up in one of the larger villages and staffed by one to four religious personnel depending on the size of the parish. Each parish had a number of smaller villages in its area with *visitas*, or chapels, which were visited regularly by the priests. These visitas were for the inhabitants who could not or would not resettle in the main or *cabecera* village, the población. In time the *visitas* became the nuclei of separate *pueblos*. All over the lowland and coastal areas of the archipelago, which came under Spanish rule, the most visible sign of Hispanicization was the emergence of the *población* organized along the gridiron plan and patterned after the European town. In the center of town was the town plaza flanked by the church and convent on one side, and the town hall on the other side. Houses were built along the streets which radiated from the town center to the outlying *barrios* like the spokes of a wheel.

In building these town centers, the native chiefs, or *cabezas*, played a significant role. They set the example by building their homes within the población. In fact, they were the members of the community who could best afford to live away from their farms, since they had tenants to till the land for them. In almost all the Philippine towns today, the elite families live within a radius of 500 meters from the church. They were instrumental in persuading their followers to resettle in the new poblaciones and in providing the necessary manpower services for the erection of those public edifices that mark the center of each población.

The resettlement process has also been called "bringing the people 'under the bells.'" The bells rang in the morning to remind the faithful to come to mass, at twilight to recite the Angelus, and at eight in the evening to pray for the souls of the faithful who had departed. Thus, resettlement was deemed essential to the consolidation of those spiritual goals accomplished. With the people living in compact villages around the

[14] *Recopilación*, 2:209 [Book 6, Title 3, Law 10].

[15] For a fuller treatment of the resettlement process and the founding of towns, see Rosario Mendoza Cortes: *Pangasinan: 1572 1800* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1974), chap. 3.

church and convent, it became that much easier for the friar-missionary to check on his newly-won converts and see that they did not laspse back into their old practices. Resettlement also facilitated both civil and spiritual administration. With the people living in compact communities, the task of enforcing royal decrees and collecting the indispensable tribute also became less difficult.

Resettlement, however, was successful only insofar as the upper-class natives were concerned. As late as the nineteenth century, the proportion of families living "under the bells" to those living scattered among the fields was only one in every five.[16]

The methods of evangelization used by the missionaries in Mexico and Peru were, in general, also used in the Orient. For the most part, the use of native languages, the pre- and postbaptismal instruction, as well as general instructional methods, were the same. The use of native languages by the missionaries for teaching the doctrines of the Catholic Church had several advantages. It was much easier for a missionary to learn the language of an area than for all the inhabitants of that area to learn Spanish. Moreover, the impression made upon the natives by a foreigner speaking their own language was extremely favorable and went far to insure the missionary's success.[17]

Great progress was made during the first half-century of evangelization. By 1622, an estimated 500,000 had been baptized in the Christian faith. This is the number usually given as the initial population of the archipelago at the beginning of the conquest. The thoroughness of the conversion is, however, open to conjecture. As late as the nineteenth century, a British observer of conditions in the East Indies expressed the opinion that a rational Christianity neither was, nor could ever be, the character of religion among a people who had been deprived of political and even personal rights. Laboring under such disadvantages, religion could only be viewed as but another form of superstition. He averred that no middle or higher class could be formed to set an example, nor could the morals of the humbler classes be formed in a country where the economy was shackled by restrictions and monopolies, for such policies tended to perpetuate poverty, ignorance, and superstition.[18]

The same writer, however, thought that in spite of all the disadvantages

[16] Ibid. p. 81.

[17] Cushner. *Spain*. p. 88.

[18] John Crawfurd. *History of the Indian Archipelago*. 3 vols. (Edinburgh. 1820). 2:276.

of intolerance, bigotry, and oppression in the Philippines, the Christian religion may yet have had a beneficial influence on its converts. The Christian natives of the Philippines, he claimed, possessed an energy, intrepidity and intelligence, not only superior to their pagan and Moslem brethren, but also superior to all the inhabitants west of the archipelago —the very people who, in an earlier period, had been their source of law, language, and civilization.[19]

Almost a century and a half later, a similar opinion was expressed by another Britisher, historian Arnold J. Toynbee. He observed that while all the recently-liberated countries of Asia were making the same effort to become effective members of the family of nations, there was vivacity and optimism in the Philippines which was not very evident in some of the neighboring countries. Such a striking difference in outlook and spirit, he said, could not be attributed to purely racial qualities, for Filipinos and Indonesians alike are members of the great Malay race. He suggested the apparent differences in national temperament could be due to the differences in cultural influences that have played upon different parts of the far-flung greater Malayan Asian archipelago. He also claimed that the Philippines was unique in having had a Spanish as well as a North-American chapter in its history, for Spain and the United States were complementary to one another as representatives of different elements in the Western Christian civilized world.[20]

It is generally accepted that what is practiced by the bulk of the Christianized Filipinos today is a kind of folk-Christianity, an example of explicit syncretism, that has blended significant elements of their ancient practices with Christian religion.[21] There were many customs in the primitive religion that could be transformed into the new forms and practices. There was also much in the new creed that was compatible with the ancient belief. Having had extensive trade contacts with the islands of the Indies, the peoples of the coastal areas had already been exposed to Hinduized Malaysian and Islamic influences. At the time of the Spanish conquest, southern Philippines had already been converted to Islam, also a monotheistic religion, and Islamic influences had already spread northward

[19] Ibid.

[20] Arnold J. Toynbee, *East to West: A Journey Round the World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 62-65.

[21] Phelan, *Hispanization*. See the chapter "The Philippinization of Spanish Catholicims." See also Onofre D. Corpuz, *The Philippines* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), pp. 34-39.

to the Manila Bay region.[22] Thus, the Christian concept of a loving and all-powerful God would not be strange to a people whose ranking deity was a *Bathala Meicapal,* meaning "God the Creator."[23] Nor was the veneration of Christian saints and martyrs strange to them, accustomed as they had been to worshiping a host of *anitos,* or natural and ancestral spirits. But the Christian saints did not necessarily replace the old anitos. The missionaries succeeded in burning all the old idols, but belief in their presence, nevertheless, continues to this day in the backward areas of the country. One custom that has persisted to this day is the ancient practice of honoring the dead. It has probably acquired a Christian flavor by being assigned to the All Saints Day of the Roman Catholic calendar. If there was an Africanization of Islam, the Filipinos accomplished, in the words of Phelan, a Philippinization of Spanish Catholicism.[24] Still another example of syncretism is the practice of family-centered rituals. *Novena* prayers, whether in honor of a patron saint or the souls of the dead, are family-centered.

The Christian religion did have a modifying effect on certain cultural and ritual practices, probably because missionary efforts to eliminate or modify them were accompanied by legal sanctions. The elimination of ritual dancing and drinking was facilitated not only by their dissociation from religious rites, but also by the campaign against these practices by the authorities. Public dancing in any form was proscribed by law and could not be held without securing a special license from the governor. The introduction or sale of liquor in the villages was totally banned.[25]

The morality related to marriage was deeply influenced by Christianity, for within the Roman Catholic Church it is considered a sacrament. Moreover, the injunctions of the Church were again reinforced by legal rules. As in many Oriental countries, child marriages were not unknown in the Philippines. This was prohibited along with polygamy, adultery, and divorce.[26] Thus, former practices fell into

[22] At the time of Legazpi's arrival, Manila was ruled by a Raja Soliman. The title was Hindu, but the name had Muslim antecedents.

[23] For the early beliefs of the Tagalogs, see Pedro Chirino, S.J., *Relación de las Islas Filipinas* (1603), in *PI,* 12:263. Also C.R. Boxer, "A late 16th Century Manila MS.," *Philippine Journal of Science* 87, 4(1958):419. An etymological study of the term *bathala* is found in Juan R. Francisco, *Indian Influences in the Philippines* (University of Madras, 1963).

[24] Phelan, *Hispnization.*

[25] *Recopilación,* 2:197-8 [Book 6, Title 1, Laws 36 and 38].

[26] Ibid., pp. 189-90 [Laws 3 and 4].

disrepute. The Church even insisted on husbands and wives returning to their original spouses, as a precondition for baptism. Many got around this neatly by applying for the annulment of their previous marriages on the grounds that they were slaves at the time of marriage and had now acquired freedom.[27]

One of the salutary effects of Christianization was the abolition of slavery. A royal decree, issued on February 8, 1588, prohibited the *caciques* and *principales* from holding slaves.[28] The pope also felt the need to issue a similar brief ordering the immediate freedom of both slaves and serfs, thus covering both the servile classes of the pre-Spanish social system.[29]

Slavery was eliminated only gradually during the seventeenth century. Between 1679 and 1686, royal legislation definitely outlawed the whole dependent system.[30] These laws finally led to the disappearance of the lowest social class of the pre-Spanish society: the class of dependents whose labor was totally monopolized by a superior.

But the semi-dependent class of sharecroppers remained rooted in the social structure up until very recent times. During the eighteenth century, it became customary for landholders to enter into *kasamajan* agreements with landless individuals.[31] In time, the pre-Hispanic terms which connote servitude, *aliping namamahay* and *aliping saguiguilid,* disappeared from the native languages and were replaced by the terms *kasamâ* and *katulong* which mean "partner" and "helper", respectively. The change that occurred appears to have been only one of nomenclature. Nevertheless, the change was still significant, for it reflected a change in attitude. It meant a growing recognition of the dignity and worth of the individual which is, no doubt, one of the lasting influences that Christianity has had in Philippine culture.

To summarize, we now extend the meaning of the term Christiani-

[27] Rodrigo Diaz Guiral, "Letter from the Fiscal to the King, July, 1606", in *PI* 14:150-58.

[28] *Recopilación*, 2:202 [Book 6, Title 2, Law 4].

[29] Pope Gregory XIV, "Liberty of the Indians in the Philippines: Rome, April 18, 1591," in *PI* 8:70-72.

[30] *Recopilación*, 2:206 [Book 4, Title 2, Law 16].

[31] Juan Jose Delgado, *Historia general de las islas del poniente llamadas Filipinas* (Manila, 1892), p. 358. The term *kasamajan* means "partnership" or "association"

zation of the Philippines, and regard it as a process of acculturation, of interaction between Spanish society, as represented by the regular Spanish clergy, and the native society, as represented by the native elite, the *cabezas de barangay*, and their native followers.[32] Since it was the native elite that had greater and more continuous contact with the Spanish friars, it would follow that the Hispanicizing process would have greater success with them and lesser impact on the rest, the effect varying with the distance from the población.

We may now consider certain factors that favorably affected the transfer of cultural items from the Hispanic society to the native society. *First*, the Christian theology satisfied certain needs in the native society which the ancient religion had failed to provide. Christianity has a metaphysical cosmoloy, a conception of the divine order of the universe and the nature of divine or supernatural forces, explanations of life and death, and of good and evil. Thus, Christianity fulfilled certain psychological needs which the primitive animism of the native order failed to satisfy.

Second, the friar-missionary agent of change successfully developed a change-relationship with his native clients. Living and working among them and speaking their language, he fostered the belief that he was competent and trustworthy. The relationship between the friars and his flock may be deduced from the following description in which:

> a village of from five thousand to twenty thousand Indians is peacefully governed by one weak old man who, with his doors open at all hours, sleeps quiet and secure in his dwelling with no other magic or guards than the love and respect which he has known how to inspire in his flock[33]

It will thus be seen that the friar-missionary established rapport and a high level of interpersonal trust with his flock.

Third, the Spanish clergy succeeded in stabilizing change and preventing discontinuances in the new behavior.[34] This was achieved by the resettlement of the people "under the bells".

[32] The *barangay* was the pre-Hispanic socio-political grouping that was absorbed into the Spanish political system.

[33] Tomas de Comyn, *Estado de las Islas Filipinas*, trans. William Walton (London: T. and J. Allman, 1821), p. 226.

[34] Factors in acculturation are discussed in Everett M. Rogers, *Modernization Among*

Finally, as members of a conquering society, the friar-missionaries had high prestige and were the bearers of novelty. In the interaction between cultures, the weaker society may actually show eagerness to accept ideas from the stronger society, if the latter appears to be better adjusted and more prosperous.[35]

The amount and extent of acculturation was limited by the extent of inter-societal contact. Thus, Hispanicization was most effective among the upper class, who had greater and more intimate contact with the innovators because of their proximity to the town church and convent. It was least influential among the lower classes, who could not or would not resettle in the población.

Ultimately, the effects of Christianization spread in greater or lesser degree throughout the native social system. Through adoption of new ideas and practices, the religious and social structure as well as the functions of the native social system were transformed or modified. The religious beliefs and practices harmonized and blended significant elements of the ancient practices with the religion introduced. The servile and dependent classes of society were also modified, if not eliminated.

In the process of acculturation, the native elite was able to retain its societal leadership within the native social system. Thus, they were able to practice selective adaptation. A dynamic equilibrium occurred in the native social system because the social changes occurred in the native social system at a rate compatible with the ability of the native system to cope with the alteration. Thus, complete disorganization was prevented. In this respect, Philippine society survived the shock of the Spanish conquest with far less psychological and material damage to its members than other countries similarly conquered.

The Philippine experience under Spain therefore served to transform a simpler, less differentiated social system to a more complex and differentiated social system. The successful spread of Christianity in the Philippines is one more example of a major and widespread diffusion of a fairly complex and non-material cultural system. This should serve to restrain the view that tools are always more readily acceptable than ideas.

Peasants (New York, 1969): See also S.N. Eisenstadt, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Change* (Boston, 1968).

[35] Mischa Titiev, *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (New York, 1961), p. 200.

Religious syncretism

William Madsen

The study of syncretism concerns both a process of acculturation and the resulting coalescence of traditions from different cultures. Ethnologists used to deal with religious syncretism in Middle America by simply describing the mixture of Spanish and Indian traits found in the contemporary supernaturalism of particular localities. Recently, research interest has shifted to the dynamics of syncretism which help explain why and how native Indian religions have changed in response to the influence of Christianity in Middle America. This article presents an analysis of both processes and patterns of religious syncretism among the Aztec and the Maya from the time of the Spanish conquest to the present. The analysis is limited to those areas for which the most complete historical documentation is available.[1]

Barnett defines the process of syncretism as a type of acceptance characterized by the conscious adaptation of an alien form or idea in terms of some indigenous counterpart.[2] The fusion of religious forms and beliefs is cited as the type instance of syncretism. He distinguishes acceptance by syncretism from acceptance by imitation, which is an attempt to copy an alien form. Barnett's concept will be used here as the basis for discussion of religious syncretism in Middle America.

Foster's valuable work on Latin America's Spanish heritage shows that the conquerors deliberately transmitted only those essentials of their culture deemed desirable for export to the New World. Spanish missionaries implanted an expurgated Catholicism free from European pagan customs observed in Spain. Foster believes that this "stripping down process" enabled the Chuch to impose a relatively uniform

[1] I am indebted to Professor Wigberto Jiménez Moreno for a number of ideas elaborated in this article and to Claudia Madsen for invaluable aid in the historical research.

[2] H.G. Barnett, **Innovation: The Basis of Cultural Change** (New York, 1953), pp. 49, 54.

Catholicism throughout Latin America with only nominal concessions to Indian beliefs and practices: "From the Rio Grande to Patagonia the cult of the Virgin Mary is the core of religious loyalty, the same saints are honored on the same days and in essentially the same fashion and the same mass draws the faithful each Sunday."[3]

Generalizations about the uniformity of Latin American Catholicism do not apply in full to Middle America, where regional contrasts in folk religions reflect differing kinds of syncretism with more than nominal concessions to Indian beliefs and practices. Mexico's success in interweaving Spanish and Indian traditions, particularly in the realm of religion, has been noted by Jiménez Moreno: "It is precisely this success which sets Mexico apart and makes her unique in Latin America."[4]

Religious syncretism among two dominant ethnic groups in Middle America at the time of the conquest poses a challenging problem: Why did the Aztec and the Maya, who shared many similar religious traditions before the conquest, develop contrasting patterns of reaction to the same form of Spanish Catholicism? The Aztec abandoned pagan rites and fused their own religious beliefs with Catholicism, whereas the Maya retained paganism as the meaningful core of their religion, which became incremented with varying degrees of Catholicism. This contrast, dating from the postconquest period, today applies mainly to folk religions of the Nahuatl Indians in the Valley of Mexico and Maya Indians of the Yucatan Peninsula. To analyze the differing patterns of Aztec and Maya syncretism, we must first examine the impact of the conquest on the religions of the two groups.

The conquest beheaded Aztec religion by destroying its focal values —war and human sacrifice. Aztec war provided sacrificial victims whose blood and hearts were fed to the gods, who were thus enabled to provide men with sun, rain, crops, and all the necessities of life. Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec tribal patron who was also the god of war and sun, required enormous meals of human blood and hearts to give him strength for his daily battle with the forces of darkness. Without such meals, it was feared that Huitzilopochtli might lose his battle and

[3] George M. Foster, *Culture and Conquest: America's Spanish Heritage*, Viking Fund Publ. in Anthropology no. 27 (1960), pp. 2-4.

[4] Wigberto Jiménez Moreno, "The Indians of America and Christianity," *Americas* 14,4(1958):87.

plunge the world into the blackness of night.[5] There is evidence that before the conquest there was growing discontent with the excessive demands of the priests for human sacrifices, but the Aztec people still believed such sacrifices were necessary for the preservation of the cosmic order. When the Spaniards abolished human sacrifice, tore down Aztec temples, smashed pagan idols, and displaced the native priesthood, they caused a severe disruption of Aztec values; this resulted in the eventual abandonment of the fundamental value premise that the successful functioning of the universe depended on human propitiation of Mexican gods.

Hernan Cortés never forgot that the goal of the conquest was the conversion of heathen Indians to Christianity. Even before the conquest of Tenochtitlan he began to destroy pagan idols and preach Christianity. While holding Montezuma as his hostage, Cortés overturned the principal idols in the Aztec temples and replaced them with images of Catholic saints. This deed "grieved Montezuma and the natives not a little," Cortés wrote. "At first they told me not to do it for if it became known throughout the town the people would rise up against me, as they believed that these idols gave them all their temporal means and, in allowing them to be ill treated, they would be angry and would give nothing, and would take away all the fruits of the soil and cause the people to die of want."[6]

Aztec priests told Montezuma that Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca, the god of night, were very angry and would leave Mexico unless the insulting foreigners were killed. When the Spaniards besieged the capital, the Aztec fought a determined battle of resistance and sacrificed their white captives to Huitzilopochtli. But the Aztec war god failed to keep an announced promise to defeat the Spaniards within a 10-day period and the long siege of Tenochtitlan ended in the Spanish victory of 1521. Although the Aztec continued to worship some pagan idols after the conquest, the cult of the war god was dead.

The conquest destroyed not only public worship of Aztec gods but also belief in the protection of Huitzilopochtli. Wolf theorizes that

[5] Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, vol. 2 (México: Ed. Robredo, 1938), p. 51-52; Antonio Caso, *The Aztecs: People of the Sun* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), pp. 12-14.

[6] Hernán Cortés, *Letters of Cortés: The Five Letters of Relation to the Emperor Charles V*, ed. and trans. F.A. MacNutt, 2 vols. *(New York, 1908)*, 1:260-62.

defeat provided a visible demonstration of the impotence of the Mexican gods.[7] It is equally likely that defeat convinced the Aztec that Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca had carried out their threat to leave Mexico. In any case, the war god ceased functioning in the Aztec universe after the conquest.

The shattering of Aztec focal values and value premises produced disruptive effects which have been perceptively appraised by Jiménez Moreno: "When it lost its own religion and the spiritual guidance of its priesthood, Mexican culture ... lost its strength. And many of the vanguished, free of the ancient norms which had imposed upon the Mexican citizen a Spartan discipline, now abandoned themselves to drunkenness and to many other vices."[8]

This appraisal is comparable to Barnett's analysis of the individual's reaction to the collapse of social controls in situations of social and political upheaval, including conquest.[9] The individual loses his orientation points because the microcosm in which he has lived has been destructuralized and is not habitable in that condition. He strains to give it some meaning and in so doing he innovates or accepts the definition of the situation offered by others, or he and his associates work out a solution together.

The destructuralization of Aztec religion elucidates the distinctive nature of culture change produced by conquest. Forced inhibition of culture complexes can temporarily suppress determinants of change which normally operate when a conjunction of differences occurs. The defeated society may be denied a choice of rejecting change or accepting new elements on the basis of their utility and compatibility with the pre-existing cultural configuration. The Aztec abandoned their religion because they were forced to do so, not because they preferred Christianity. Indian discontent with the burden of human sacrifice may have facilitated the inhibition of Aztec rites, but it is doubtful that they would have ceased without the use of force.

The suppression of public pagan worship did not result in the immediate acceptance of Chrsitianity. The conquest was followed by a period of nearly ten years in which the dominant Aztec reaction to Christianity was rejection. The main causes of the initial resistance to

[7] Eric. R. Wolf, *Sons of the Shaking Earth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 168.

[8] Jiménez Moreno, "Indians of America", p. 81.

[9] Barnett, *Innovation*, p. 72.

Christianity were Aztec bitterness toward the conquerors and direct conflict between native polytheism and Christian monotheism. The full extent of the conflict between paganism and Christianity was not perceived at first by the Aztec, owing to the language barrier, but they did understand that the Christians were bent on destroying idols of all the Indian gods.

The period of rejection may be viewed in terms of Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance[10]. Such dissonance arises when people are faced with new events, new information, and decisions. The individual may try to re-establish consonance by changes of cognition, behavior, or values, but if the discrepancy between the old and the new is too great, he may reject the new in order to maintain consonance. The discrepancy between paganism and Christianity throughout Middle America was a major reason for rejecting the new religion. But Aztec rejection of Christianity did not restore consonance because the Aztec had developed grave doubts about their old gods.

Unfortunately, there is little documentation to show precisely what happened to Aztec religious beliefs in the crucial years of despair and anxiety after the conquest, when the Indians were no longer certain which gods ordered the universe or what they expected of men. Idolatry and human sacrifice were practiced secretly around Mexico City and Texcoco until at least 1525. A cacique of Texcoco was publicly burned to death by the Inquisition in 1539 for worshipping idols of Tlaloc, the Aztec rain god, and other pagan deities in his own home. It is significant that the worship of Indian rain gods survived the conquest, whereas the cult of the war god disappeared. Rain continued but Aztec victories stopped after the conquest.

The first missionaries were three Flemish monks who arrived in Mexico in 1522 and wisely directed their main efforts toward learning Nahuatl. The outstanding member of the trio was Pedro de Gante, who is called the father of Mexican education. The reaction of the Aztec toward the missionaries and their religion was recorded by Gante: "The common people were like animals without reason. We could not bring them into the pale or congregation of the church, nor to the doctrine classes, nor to the semons without their fleeing from these things like the devil flees from the cross. For more than three years they fled like wild men from the priests."[11]

[10] Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, 1959).

[11] Pedro de Gante, *Cartas de Pedro de Gante, O.F.M., primer educador de*

The arrival of twelve Franciscans in Mexico City in 1524 astounded the Aztecs because the ragged friars had walked barefoot all the way from Veracruz. When Cortés knelt before the priest as they entered the city, the Indians also fell to their knees. The Spartan self-discipline of the Franciscans and the respect they commanded from the conquerors created among the Aztec a favorable impression which endured and became a powerful influence in the conversion.

Although rejection still prevailed as the dominant Aztec reaction to Christianity, a period of limited compliance began with the compulsory education of Indian children in Franciscan schools established in 1524. This period conforms to Kelman's concept of compliance as a process of attitude change in which the agent of change possesses means of control.[12] The individual changes his behavior because he expects to gain rewards or approval and avoid punishment or disapproval by compliance. His change of behavior does not involve acceptance of new values.

Backed by the authority of Cortés, the Franciscans ordered the Aztecs to build boarding schools in Texcoco, Tlaxcala, and Hejotzingo, where Indian nobles were commanded to place their children. They obeyed this command because they feared punishment for disobedience. Each school had from 600 to 1000 pupils. The learning of Christianity began through a process of enforced imitation as the friars taught their Indian pupils how to kneel, make the sign of the cross, and recite Latin prayers.[13]

Simultaneous attempts to teach Christian dogma failed because the friars had not yet learned Nahuatl and tried in vain to teach Christian beliefs by means of signs. After observing one priest waving his hands and preaching loudly in his unintelligible tongue, a group of adult Indians concluded that the poor man must be crazy. But the diligent Franciscans quickly mastered Nahuatl and established doctrine schools for children in most of the important Indian towns of central Mexico. The friars had anticipated by four centuries Bruner's theory that new ideas transmited early in a child's training are most resistant to change.[14]

América. Compilado por Fr. Fidel de Chauvet, O.F.M. Impreso por Fr. Junipero Serra, Provincia del Santo Evangelio de México (México, n.d.), pp. 42-47.

[12] H. Kelman, "Compliance, Indentification and Internalization: Three Processes of Attitude Change," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2(1958): 51-60.

[13] G. de Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica indiana* vol. 3 (México, 1945), pp. 70-71.

[14] E.M. Bruner, "Cultural Transmission and Cultural Change," *Southwest Journal of Anthropology* 12 (1956):194.

Missionary methods of enforcing compliance with Christianity are described by Gante in a report on the doctrine school at the church of San Francisco in Mexico City.[15] About 1000 young people were confined to the school, where they were not permitted to converse. "This rule was made so they would forget their bloody idolatries and excessive sacrifices", Gante wrote. "When there is a fiesta or dedication for the demons (pagan gods) the most able students are sent to forbid it ... Then I summon them (the idolaters) to Mexico City and they are reprimanded. Other times they are frightened with threats of justice and told that they must be punished if they do it again. In this way, little by little many idolatries are destroyed and abandoned."

Adults were lined up and marched to church carrying a banner and singing religious songs on Sundays and feast days. Roll was called outside the church and absentees were later punished with six lashes on the back. Before the sermon, one of the older pupils quoted from memory some Christian doctrine, which the Indians repeated word for word after him.

While Franciscan schools administered consistent punishment for noncompliance they also offered social rewards for compliance with the teachings of the friars. The sons of the Indian nobility who attended the shools were trained to become the native ruling class and were later appointed to high civil offices. They learned reading, writing, music, masonry, carpentry, ceramics, weaving, metal working, and silk culture.

During the course of close contact in the schools, the Indian children came to respect and admire their Franciscan teachers. This warm interpersonal relationship later extended to entire communities in central Mexico, where the Franciscans doctored the sick, comforted the dying, and defended the accused before Spanish magistrates. The Indians particularly esteemed the Franciscans for their tradition of self-denial, which approached the Aztec ideal. The monks practiced mortification of the body by wearning hair shirts and lashing themselves for their faults. They went barefoot, wore coarse, torn habits, slept on grass pillows, and ate Indian food including chiles and tortillas.[16]

[15] Gante, *Cartas*, pp. 42-47.

[16] C. Braden, *Religious Aspects of the Conquest of Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1930), pp. 134-37.

The Franciscans may be credited with a great deal of practical wisdom in attempting to begin the conversion with Indian children whose values had not yet been crystallized. Although these children did not accept, or perhaps even understand, the entire Christian value system, they had made a change in their valued entities by the time they eagerly assisted the friars in the destruction of Aztec temples, which began in 1525.

The Catholic education of Indian children created a deep value conflict between the older and younger generations in Aztec society. The basic conflict between Aztec and Christian religions was vividly emphasized by the Spanish missionaries, who tried to make paganism and Christianity as incompatible as possible. This was not hard to do. The Indians believed in many gods whereas the Spaniards taught belief in one God and denounced all Aztec gods as demons. The Christian God depended on no man whereas Indian gods required offerings of human blood in order to run the universe. The Indians believed in multiple creations and destructions of the universe whereas Christianity taught that the world had been created only once by one God. Christianity threatened punishment in the fires of hell for the soul of an individual who flouted Christian ethics whereas the Aztec did not believe in afterworld torture. Christianity emphasized salvation of the soul through perfection of the individual character whereas Indian religion valued the individual only for his contribution to collective activities designed to preserve the cosmic order. Catholicism taught that the individual chooses the path of righteousness or wickedness of his own free will, whereas the Aztec believed that a man must resign himself to the fate meted out to him by the gods at the time of his birth. The Christian value most emphasized by the friars was the salvation of the individual soul through Christianity and the corollary threat of eternal torture in hell for adherence to paganism.

The friars endeavored to teach the Aztec the Christian values as well as Catholic ritual, but it is difficult to ascertain how much Christian theology the Indians understood. New forms are relatively easy to transmit, but it is almost impossible to communicate abstract religious concepts in their entirety, as Linton has pointed out.[17]

When the Aztec school children began destroying pagan temples and idols, they exhibited a fierce loyalty to Christian supernaturals and a

[17] R. Linton, *The Study of Man* (New York, 1936), p. 339.

zeal for Christian martyrdom that went beyond mere compliance with the instruction of the friars. In fact it is not too farfetched to hypothesize that the Christian war against paganism replaced Aztec religious war as a focal value of the younger generation.

The circumscribed acceptance of certain Christian values by the school children was a reflection of their identification with the Franciscan agents of change. In the process of identification, as defined by Kelman, the individual accepts influence in order to establish or maintain a satisfying, self-defining relationship to the agent of change who is an attractive figure.[18] Similar concepts formulated by Linton and by Osgood and Tannenbaum have pointed out that acceptance is promoted by high esteem for the agents of change.[19]

The conflicting values of the younger and older generations led to violent clashes in behavior. Indian children spied on their parents and reported idols found at home. Several children were beaten to death by their elders for destroying pagan idols. One Indian killed his own son for this reason. A group of pupils in Tlaxcala stoned an Aztec priest to death in the belief that he was a demon and bragged that they had been aided in their deed by God and St. Mary.[20] The divided reaction of the two generations to the destruction of Aztec temples is described by Mendieta: "Thus fell the walls of Jericho with shout of praise and joy from the faithful children, while those who were not of that number stood by frightened, amazed and heart-broken, seeing their temples and gods fall to the earth."[21]

The acceptance of Christianity had become an alternative as defined in Linton's theory of universals and alternatives.[22] Linton postulates that a folk culture consists of a core of universal culture elements shared by all members of the society and a small zone of alternative culture elements that complete for acceptance as universals. When a culture is changing very rapidly the alternatives increase while the

[18] Kelman, "Compliance", pp. 51-60.

[19] Linton, *The Study of Man*, pp. 343-4; C.E. Osgood and P. Tannenbaum, "The Principal of Congruity and the Prediction of Attitude Change," *Psychological Review* 62 (1955): 42-55.

[20] T. Motolinía, *The Indians of New Spain*, ed. and trans. E.A. Foster (Berkeley, 1950), pp. 243-50.

[21] Mendieta, *Historia*, vol. 2, p. 71.

[22] Linton, *The Study of Man*, pp. 282-3.

universals decrease, causing the culture to lose pattern and coherence. Without a wide community of ideas the members of the group will not react to particular stimuli as a unit. The divided reaction of the Aztec to the destruction of pagan temples and idols reflected a sharp decrease in unversals, accompanied by loss of cultural coherence.

The older generation began to grant Christianity a minimum of overt compliance without accepting its values. The Aztec hid pagan idols behind Christian altars and in the pedestals of Christian crosses in a futile attempt to mollify the Catholic priests without further offending their own gods, even though they feared those gods might have forsaken them. Some villagers worshipped images of pagan gods placed side by side with Catholic images of the crucified Christ and the Virgin Mary. "It may have been that, having a hundred gods, they wanted a hundred and one," Motolinía shrewdly observed.[23]

The joint worship of Aztec and Spanish images was a first attempt at syncretism of Indian and Catholic forms. This type of syncretism by simple addition of new gods to old had ample precedent in Mexican culture, which had traditionally adopted deities of the numerous tribes that invaded the Valley of Mexico in preconquest times. The friars actively opposed this kind of syncretism by confiscating the Catholic images and destroying the pagan ones wherever they were found together.

Many adults who had been attending church on Sundays and feast days accepted Catholic baptism at the urging of the Franciscans. Motolinía reports that the friars often frightened the Aztec into receiving baptism in order to escape torture by the devil in hell.[24] At the end of one sermon on the devil, the Indians became "so alarmed and terrified that they trembled to hear what the friars were saying, and some poor wretches began to come to baptism and to seek the kingdom of God, seeking it with tears and sighs of importunity." Jiménez Moreno points out that grave sanctions were imposed on those who persisted in pagan worship without receiving baptism.[25] "It has not been emphasized sufficiently that a considerable portion, if not the majority, of the Indians of the ancient Mexican empire were obliged in the first half of the sixteenth century to abandon their ancient religion by force", he states.

[23] Motolinía, *Indians*, pp. 48-9.

[24] Ibid., p. 52.

[25] Jiménez Moreno, "Indians of America", p. 32.

There is some indication that the older generation associated Catholic baptism with a similar pagan rite which endowed baptismal water with divine power to remove filth from a newborn baby's heart. As late as the 17th century, it was common for an infant baptized by a Catholic priest to receive a Spanish first name and an Aztec second name in honor of the Catholic saint and the pagan god on whose day he was born.[26]

In order to stimulate adult participation in celebrations of the Catholic ritual calendar, the Franciscans initiated their own forms of religious syncretism. Gante conceived the idea of giving pagan songs and dances a Christian motif so they could be used at Catholic ceremonials in the same way they had formerly been used to honor Aztec gods. His conscious intention of fusing pagan and Catholic forms is clearly stated in the following letter:

> In all their [Aztec] adoration of their gods they sang and danced before the gods. When they had to sacrifice some victims for some purpose such as obtaining victory over their enemies or for temporal necessities, before they killed the victim they had to sing and dance before the idol.
>
> Since I had seen this and that all their songs were dedicated to the gods I composed a very solemn song about the law of God and the faith and how God made man to save the human race and how he was born of the Virgin Mary leaving her pure and entire.
>
> I also gave them patterns to paint on their mantles so they could dance with them because this was the way the patterns had been used by the Indians ... Then we invited all the people within ten leagues of Mexico City to come to the fiesta of the Nativity of Christ our Redeemer and so many came that they could not get into the patio.
>
> In this way they first came to show obedience to the church and the patios were full of people.[27]

Gante's innovation spread far and wide in Mexico and attracted hundreds of Indians to church ceremonies. However, adult

[26] J. de la Serna, "Manual de ministros de Indios", *Anales del Museo Nacional* 6(1892): 282.

[27] Gante, *Cartas*, pp. 42-47.

participation in Catholic ceremonies was not accompanied by any profound value change. The real turning point in the conversion came with the miraculous appearance of the Indian Virgin of Guadalupe in 1531. This event brought about the emotional acceptance of a new faith, which has been aptly called Guadalupinist Catholicism.[28]

The dark-skinned Virgin appeared to an Aztec man on the hill of Tepeyac, where the Aztec goddess Tonantzin was accustomed to appear in former times. Tonantzin (also called Coatlicue) was one of three earth goddesses who apparently were three aspects of the same deity. Aztec legend identifies Tonantzin as the mother of the gods, including Huitzilopochtli who was created by divine conception. On December 9, 1531, Juan Diego saw a beautiful Indian lady dressed in shining garments on the top of the hill. She spoke to him in Nahuatl and identified herself as the Mother of God. Later she told the Indian that she was "one of his kind".

The Virgin requested that a church be built on top of the hill "so that in it I may show and make known and give all my love, my mercy, and my help and my protection —I am in truth your merciful mother— to you and to all the other people dear to me."[29]

Juan Diego's vision fired religious fervor all over central Mexico. "From that historic moment total evangelization was an accomplished thing", Pope Pius XII proclaimed at a commemorative ceremony in 1945. Indians came from great distances, bringing offerings to the Catholic Virgin whom they called Tonantzin, and they erected a church on the spot where the vision occured. It was very natural for the Aztec to associate Guadalupe with the pagan Tonantzin since both were virgin mothers of gods and both appeared at the same Place. These pagan associations were denounced as "inventions of the devil" by Sahagún, who opposed the growth of the Guadalupan cult.

Despite Sahagún's misgivings, the Virgin of Guadalupe was not a mere Christian front for the worship of a pagan goddess. The adoration of Guadalupe represented a profound change of Aztec religious belief. The extent of this change can be seen by comparing Indian concepts of the Catholic Virgin and her pagan predecessor. The

[28] Jiménez Moreno, "Indians of America," p. 92.

[29] L. Lazo de la Vega, "The Miraculous Apparition of the Beloved Virgen Marv, Our Lady of Guadalupe, at Tepeyac, near Mexico City," in *The Dark Virgen: The Book of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, ed. D. Demarest and C. Taylor (New York, 1956), pp. 41-53.

pagan Tonantzin was a dual-natured earth goddess who fed her Mexican children and devoured their corpses. She wore a necklace of human hands and hearts with a human skull hanging over her flaccid breasts, which nursed both gods and men. Her idol depicts her as a monster with two streams of blood shaped like serpents flowing from her neck. Like other major deities in the Aztec pantheon, Tonantzin was both a creator and destroyer. The nature and functions of the Virgin of Guadalupe are entirely different from those of the pagan earth goddess. The Christian ideals of beauty, love, and mercy associated with the Virgin of Guadalupe were never attributed to the pagan deity. The functions of the Catholic Virgin are much broader and more beneficial to man than those of the Aztec nature goddess. Guadalupe protects her children (the Mexicans) from harm, cures their sicknesses, and aids them in all manner of daily undertakings. She is not a nature goddess. Her children repay her for her aid, not with human sacrifices, but with vows to make pilgrimages to her shrine and give her offerings of flowers, candles, and *exvotos*. Only when a sacred vow is broken or some other grave religious error is committed does Guadalupe punish her errant child with sickness, misfortune, or death as Aztec deities used to do. Of the many *"santos"* and *"Cristos"* worshipped in Mexico, the Virgin of Guadalupe is the most benevolent and the most representative of Christian ethical values.

In the 16th century the Virgin of Guadalupe came to be a symbol of the new Indian Catholicism as distinguished from the foreign Catholicism of the conquerors. The Aztec adapted Catholicism to their own religious concepts by a process of fusional syncretism that eventually eliminated almost all visible vestiges of paganism. Guadalupinist Catholicism spread rapidly in central Mexico and became the focal value of Aztec culture. By 1537 some nine million Indians had been baptized in this area, according to Motolinía.[30]

Pilgrimage centers where pagan gods had been worshipped before the conquest became centers of Catholic pilgrimages honoring the Señor de Chalma, the Virgen de los Remedios, and other famous saints. Before the conquest each Indian village had a patron diety whose idol was adorned with robes and jewels and presented with offerings. After the conversion each town adopted a Catholic patron saint whose image was likewise dressed in fine clothing and presented with offerings. Catholic confession was accepted in terms of its pagan

[30] Motolinía, *Indians*, p. 133.

counterpart. Pagan gods forgave confessed mistakes but once, so the Aztec resorted to confession only in time of crisis or old age in order to secure recovery from illness or misfortune sent by an angry deity or in order to escape civil punishment for a crime. Aztec criminals, invalids, and old people confessed to Catholic priests in the belief that confession would restore their health and ensure judicial pardon of their crimes.[31]

Village religion was supervised by the friars, who organized the Indians of their parishes into *cofradías* responsible for the celebration of Catholic feast days. Honor and prestige in the village were achieved by holding office in the cofradía, which put on a successful performance for the saints. Village fiestas included dance-dramas such as the one known as Moors and Christians which re-enacts the Spanish conquest of the Moors in Granada in 1492. The Indians reinterpreted this Spanish drama as a portrayal of the conquest of Mexico and added Hernan Cortés to its cast of characters. The friars permitted some Indian villages to retain pagan dance-dramas such as "Los Voladores", the flying-pole dance performed in conjunction with the feast of Corpus Christi.[32]

By 1555, barely a quarter of a century after the conquest, the conversion of the Aztec had been accomplished.[33] About that time there began a turbulent period of readjustment in which the Aztec lost the leadership of their beloved Franciscans. The Indians were caught in the middle of a feud between the friars and the secular clegy, who had started arriving in large numbers. Canonical law specified that the secular clergy were the proper parish administrators, but the friars had obtained special papal dispensation to carry out the early parish work since they were the only priests in central Mexico when the evangelization began. The broad powers of the Franciscan, Dominican, and Augustinian orders were bitterly disputed by the newly arrived secular clergy. In 1555 the First Provincial Council of Mexico imposed strict limitations on the powers of the friars. The Franciscans were finally turned out of their jobs in 1640 when numerous parishes were transferred to the authority of the secular clergy. Throughout the controversy, the Aztec sided with the

[31] Sahagún, *Historia General*, vol. 2, pp. 32-3.

[32] W. Madsen and C. Madsen, "The human Bird of Papantla," *Travel Magazine* 91(1948):24.

[33] Jiménez Moreno, *Indians of America*, p. 89.

Franciscans and violently resisted the secular clergy, who tried to take over their churches and convents.

Interpersonal relations between the secular clergy and the Aztec were bad from the beginning. Obviously, Aztec hostility toward the secular clergy was patterned in part after that of the Franciscans. But there were other reasons. Many members of the secular branch never mastered the Nahuatl language and had to turn to the Franciscans for aid with confessions. Furthermore, the secular priests who came to Mexico in midcentury were accused of avarice, evil character, ostentation, unwillingness to put up with discomfort, and despising the Indians.[34]

The loss of Franciscan leadership produced a marked effect on Aztec Catholicism. Mendieta, writting in the latter part of the 16th century, contrasts the Aztec's irregular attendance at Mass in this period with his former faithful attendance. It became painfully obvious to the Catholic clergy that internalization of Christian moral values and mataphysical concepts had not taken place among the Aztecs. The archbishop of Mexico charged that the Indians did not believe the articles of faith and the mysteries which the church celebrates. He further asserted that the Indians did not practice Christian ethics and were inclined to drunkenness, stealing, lying, and usury.[35]

Some of the difficulties of implanting Christian values might have been averted if the Spaniards had trained a native priesthood, but Indians were not allowed to receive sacramental ordination as secular priests or enter the Orders during the colonial era. Mestizos also were barred from the priesthood until 1588. From the 17th century on, Spanish priests had little to do with the development of Indian religion in many Mexican villages. This lack of clerical supervision gave free rein to the Aztec genius for religious syncretism.

Seventeenth-century worship of Catholic saints by the Mexicans was denounced as a form of idolatry by Jacinto de la Serna, who observed that some Indians thought the saints were gods.[36] He reported that the Mexicans offered animal sacrifices and pulque to Xiuhtecuhtli, the Aztec fire god, and the Catholic saints, who were jointly worshipped at ceremonies held in private homes. Serna was surprised

[34] Braden, *Religious Aspects*, p. 215, 220-21.

[35] Ibid., p. 248.

[36] de la Serna, "Manual", p. 281.

to discover that the Mexicans believed sickness was sent by vengeful saints.

Except for Serna's fragmentary report, there is little documentation on the process of integration whereby the Aztec made adjustments in both Catholic and pagan beliefs in order to fit them together in the Indian configuration of culture. However, the patterns of colonial syncretism and integration can still be discerned in the contemporary religion of a Nahuatl Indian village in the Valley of Mexico.[37]

Supernaturalism is the focus of modern Aztec culture and it penetrates all aspects of life in the villge of San Francisco Tecospa. Religion today functions as an explanation of the ordering of the universe, the means of obtaining temporal necessities, the road to prestige, and an outlet for aesthetic expression. The forms of Indian religion are almost entirely Catholic as manifested in the veneration of Catholic saints, the celebration of Catholic feast days, and the use of Catholic sacraments. Religious beliefs represent a fusion of Aztec and Spanish traditions elaborated with local innovations.

The most important divinity in the village pantheon is the Virgin of Guadalupe, who is also called Tonantzin. She was born before the creation of mankind. Guadalupe is the mother of God and all the Mexicans. Like the Aztec earth goddess, Guadalupe fed both god and man with her milk. She is even more powerful than God because she can stop Him from destroying mankind. Indian comogony integrates Catholic divinities and biblical stories into the Aztec concept of multiple creations and destructions of the universe and mankind. The Christian God of love is transformed into a hostile Destroyer although He is also recognized as the Creator. He has lost his Christian omnipotence because his plans can be thwarted by the Virgin of Guadalupe. God and Guadalupe now figure prominently in the Aztec concept that the universe is ordered by a balance of opposites such as life and death, heat and cold, male and female. The universe of Tecospa is regulated by the opposition of male and female divinities as evidenced in the struggle between God and Guadalupe over the destruction of the world.

God and the Devil have replaced pagan deities as arbiters of human destiny in modern Tecospan fatalism. A man's fate is decided at birth

[37] W. Madsen, *Christo-Paganism: A Study of Mexican Religious Syncretism*, Middle American Research Institute, no. 19 (New Orleans, Tulane University, 1957), pp. 105-80.

by a battle between God and the Devil which takes place in the flames of the Aztec birth fire. If God wins the fight for the baby's soul, the child receives a good shadow but if the Devil wins the child receives a heavy shadow. A person with a good shadow is successful in life and his soul goes to heaven, but an individual with a heavy shadow is doomed to bad luck, poor health, poverty, lack of friends, commitment of sins, and hell.

Conflicting Christian and pagan concepts of the afterworld have been reconciled in a philosophy whose logical inconsistencies do not bother the Indians. Like the ancient Aztec, Tecospans believe that men who die in battle and women who die in childbirth go directly to the sky world regardless of their sins, while souls of drowned persons go to an earthly paradise inhabited by rain dwarfs. Heaven is divided into three parts: a garden of flowers for children, a place for adults, and a place for God and the saints. In the adult part life goes on much the same as it did in Tecospa — people live in the same houses, wear the same clothes, and work in the same fields. Hell has three names: hell, purgatory, or Mitla, the name of the Aztec underworld. Devils called *"pingos"* burn firewood under condemned souls and jab them with pitchforks. Only witches and cold-blooded murderers are doomed to stay in hell forever. Sinners who die on the Day of the Dead are lucky because the gates of hell are open and they can go right through hell to heaven without being punished. Souls in heaven and hell come to earth to visit their families on November 2.

Catholic saints have lost their saintly character and become human-natured divinities who lie, lose their tempers, wreak revenge, and indulge in love affairs as the Aztec gods used to do. Unlike the pagan deity, the saint does not function as a specialized nature god in charge of the sun, the rain, or the earth. San Francisco, the village patron saint, performs a wide variety of functions such as bringing rain in time of drought, punishing theft of church property, curing illness, and generally protecting the village. With the consent of God and the help of Aztec rain dwarfs, San Francisco miraculously produces rain in Tecospa even when the saints of other villages have failed in this task. The images of the saints are clothed and worshipped and treated like divine personages even though Tecospans also speak of the saints as being up in heaven. San Francisco is the most popular saint in heaven. The most prominent Christs in the local pantheon are said to be brothers and they are classified as "santos".

Aztec ethics have been reoriented so that today man's primary

obligations are to Catholic saints rather than to pagan gods. As in ancient times, the neglect of ritual obligations subjects the individual or the whole community to the vengeance of supernatural beings who punish Tecospans with sickness, crop failure, and other misfortunes.

Virtues and vices are Aztecan. Bravery, the supreme virtue in Aztec religion, is highly valued in Tecospa where a man gains respect by fighting enemies who have wronged him. Beating up a witch who has threatened a man's family is considered a heroic deed. Other major virtues include the fulfillment of ritual obligations to the "santos" and industriousness in providing for one's family. Chronic drunkenness is disparaged because it interferes with a man's work. Personal ambition and avarice are despised. Adultery is a vice when it involves desertion of a spouse, but wives consider their husbands' extramarital relations as normal male behavior.

The Christian ethic of individual character perfection is lacking in Tecospa. The Indians do not love the Christian God nor do they think he loves them. They feel no obligation to love their neighbors or their enemies. Meekness, righteousness, and purity of heart are not virtues. The Tecospan concept of sin is mainly limited to those vices condemned both by Aztec and Catholic ethics, namely: witchcraft, premeditated murder, manifest disrespect for supernaturals, and failure to provide for one's family. The only major sin of Christian origin is bargaining with devils.

The Tecospa pattern of fusional syncretism extends to the other Nahuatl Indian *pueblos* in the *delegación* of Milpa Alta. Variations of the same general pattern are found in Indian and Mestizo communities in the delegación of Xochimilco and in the Nahuatl village of Tepoztlan cross the mountains from Tecospa. Even in Mexico City and its suburbs, many Aztec beliefs are integrated into the supernaturalism of the lower classes, which is a far cry from the orthodox Catholicism of the educated urban dwellers. It is difficult to say how far the general pattern of religious syncretism found in Tecospa extends outside of the Valley of Mexico because the problem has not been adequately investigated. The cult of the saints in the Nahuatl Indian village of Tequila, Veracruz, seems to resemble saint worship in Tecospa.[38] Carrasco's excellent study of economic, social, and religious interactions in modern Tarascan culture indicates that

[38] G. Soustelle, *Tequila: un village nahuatl du Mexique oriental*, Institute Ethnologique: Travaux et Memories, no. 62 (Paris, 1958), pp. 181-202.

both the form and the ideology of Tarascan religion are largely Spanish in origin.[39] However, he does mention a few native concepts such as belief in multiple creations and destructions of the universe and the polytheistic nature of worship.

The comparative analysis of religious syncretism in Aztec and Maya religions in a hazardous task largely because historical information for the Maya is less complete than for the Aztec. Spanish chronicles document the process of pagan resistance to Christianity but fail to show when, why, and how Catholic elements were accepted and modified by the Maya. Hence, it is impossible to delineate periods of postconquest change in Maya religion comparable to those observed in the history of Aztec religion after the conquest. My discussion of Maya religious syncretism is mainly limited to the Yucatan Peninsula since sources on that area provide a broader historical perspective than is available for other parts of the Maya region.

The religion and values of Maya culture survived the conquest intact to become the backbone of resistance to Christianity. By the time the Spaniards began the conquest of Yucatan in 1527, Maya ceremonial centers were in decline and many of the famous temples had been abandoned.[40] Hence the Maya had no centralized theocracy comparable to that of the Aztecs which the Spaniards wiped out with one bold stroke. The grass-roots religion of the Maya was centered in widely scattered hamlets that were generally more isolated and more resistant to change than the towns of the Mexican plateau.

As Maya culture was based on agriculture, so Maya religion was focused on the worship of rain, wind, and sky gods whose help was needed for growing crops. Prominent among these gods were the *chaacs* (rain gods), the *pauahtuns* (wind gods) and the *bacabs* (sky bearers). Each of these categories consisted of four individual deities who dwelled at the four cardinal points marked by four sacred trees which were represented by crosses. The Maya prayed to the cross as a god of rain. Roys believes that the pre-Columbian cross may have been personfied as the cross is in Yucatan today.[41]

[39] P. Carrasco, *Tarascan Folk Religion: An Analysis of Economic, Social and Religious Interaction*, Middle American Research Institute, no. 17 (New Orleans, Tulane University, 1952), pp. 23-56.

[40] S.G. Morley, *The Ancient Maya*, ed. G.W. Brainerd, 3rd ed., rev. (Stanford: Standford University Press, 1956), p. 79.

[41] Ralph L. Roys, *The Indian Background of Colonial Yucatan*, Carnegie Institute

The Maya had adopted the Aztec practice of human sacrifice, but it never became the focus of Maya religion. When the Maya prayed for rain, crops, or health they customarily sacrificed small animals and made offerings of their own blood drawn from various parts of the body, in addition to offerings of food and copal incense. Only in case of community disaster such as a famine were human beings sacrificed to the gods. In time of drought the Maya threw live victims into sacred wells in order to obtain rain.[42] I find no Maya equivalent of the Aztec concept that the strength and functioning of the gods depended on their regular consumption of blood and hearts obtained through human sacrifice.

Maya cosmological concepts and religious rites were generally similar to those of the Aztec. One distinctive form of Maya worship was the cult of the talking idol. Pilgrims came from great distances to the shrine of Ix Chel at Cozumel, where a large pottery idol of the pagan goddess answered the questions of her worshippers. From an adjoining room, a priest allegedly crept into the idol and impersonated the goddness.

The persistence of Maya religion accompanied by the rejection of Christianity was causally related to: (1) the long duration of the Spanish attempt to conquer the Maya; (2) the isolation and decentralization of the Maya; (3) the hostile nature of interpersonal relations between the Maya and the Spaniards during and after the conquest; and (4) the survival of the Maya value system.

The conquest of Yucatan lasted for twenty years (1527-46) and the conquest of Peten was not completed until 1696. During the period of Spanish military campaigns, there was a strong feeling among the Maya that their gods would help them kill the ruthless foreigners. After the conquest, Maya hatred of the Spaniards and their religion was strengthened by the cruel and inept methods of the Catholic missionaries.

The famous Fray Diego de Landa came to Yucatan in 1549. Although Landa and a few other Franciscans mastered the Maya language, more than half the friars never became proficient in the native tongue. Consequently the daily teaching of Christianity in Maya villages was left up to

---

Publication, no. 613 (Washington, 1943), p. 75; A.M. Tozzer, ed. and trans., *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, by Diego de Landa, Papers of the Peabody Museum, vol. 18 (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1941), p. 207.

[42] Tozzer, *Relación de las cosas*, p. 180.; Roys, *Indian Background*, p. 81.

native schoolmasters who had received little instruction in Christian doctrine. Only occasionally did the friars visit the villages.[43]

The Franciscans attempted to improve the teaching of Christianity by forcing the Maya to leave their own pueblos and move to convent towns where doctrine schools were established. Maya pueblos were burned when their inhabitants refused to move. The disastrous consequences of this forced relocation are reported in the Relación de Valladolid:

> There was in these provinces at the time they were conquered a large number of Indians and at the present time there is not the twentieth part (of this number). Principally, the diminution which has occurred and exists at present has been caused by the friars of the Order of St. Francis moving them from their old sites and native climate and waters... burning their pueblos and ordering them to be burned, settling them where they wished in places not so healthful nor suitable as those where they lived; the said friars making them work on the very sumptuous monasteries which they have built... and they never stop building, not having the consideration to order the work to cease at the time when the Indians need to attend to their own cultivating, on account of which the Indians have always complained because it has caused them to be lacking in supplies to sustain their lives. And for this reason, as well as on account of the moving and joining of the pueblos, and punishments under pretext of religious teaching the friars imposed, and other kinds of compulsion, and stocks which they have and use, they (the Indians) have come to the diminution referred to; and they are so afraid of them (the friars) that not only have they fled to the forests without reappearing, but some have died from pure grief and sorrow.[44]

Franciscan attempts to gather Maya children in monastery school were thwarted by the Spanish *encomenderos*, who engaged in a bitter feud with the friars. The encomenderos opposed the relocation of the Maya because it reduced the amount of forced labor and tribute they received from the Indians. Nevertheless, a considerable number of children attended monastery schools where they received Catholic baptism and learned to destroy idols including those of their own parents. This period of juvenile compliance was short lived.

In 1558 Landa "discovered" idolatry among those Maya who had been baptized in the Catholic faith. "These people... were perverted by the priests whom they had at the time of their idolatry, he wrote. "And they returned to the worship of their idols and to offer them sacrifices not only of incense but also of human bood".

[43] Tozzer, *Relación de las cosas*, pp. 69-70.

[44] Ibid., p. 74.

The Inquisition that followed Landa's discovery was carried out on a scale never approximated among the Aztec. In 1562, Landa sent friars to gather information in the province of Mani where they found out that the common people, chiefs, elders, and schoolteachers were all guilty of idolatry. Testimony was extracted by imprisoning and torturing the natives. The types of torture include: the water torture in which the mouth was fastened open with a stick and water was poured in until the abdomen swelled up, after which the investigator stood on top of the victim until water mixed with blood came out of the mouth, nose, and ears; suspension by the hands and wrists with or without stones attached to the feet; scorching with wax tapers; scalding; tying the arms and thighs with cords which were twisted and tightened with sticks. Some 4,549 men and women were tortured by these techniques; an estimated 6,330 persons were whipped and shorn. A whipping on the bare flesh included as many as 200 lashes. It was reported that 157 Maya died in 1562 as a result of torture. Landa denied that the Indians had died "on account of said Indians having been hung up by said friars". If any Maya died during the period of the investigation, they must have hanged themselves in the bushes in order to avoid giving up their idols and evil ways, Landa insisted.[45]

Yucatan Indians found guilty of idolatry were punished at public ceremonies. On July 12, 1562, Landa held his notorious *auto de fe* at Mani where convicted idolators were whipped with 100-200 lashes, shorn, and sentenced to wear the "sambenito", an apron-like garment bearing a likeness of the devil worn as a sign of infamy. Other punishments included: slavery sentences, loss of civil office and other honors held by Maya leaders, imprisonment, exile from the pueblo, the wearing of a rope around the neck, and fines. Sometimes the Indian was required to attend Mass every two weeks and confess once a year.

Landa's attitude toward the Maya and the conversion is reflected in his comments on the auto de fe. 'They (the friars) placed many (Maya) upon the scaffold wearing a paper coronet, and scourged and shorn, while others wore clothes with the sambenito for a time. And some, deceived by the devil, hanged themselves for grief, and in

[45] Ibid., pp. 76-79.

general they all showed deep repentance and a willingness to become good Christians".

The deep resentment harbored by the Maya against the Franciscans was expressed in a letter written to the King of Spain in 1567 by a group of native chiefs who complained that Landa and his companions had "tortured, killed, and put us to scandal."[46]

Landa further antagonized the natives by burning Maya codices recording their knowledge of the calendar, plants, animals, and ancient customs. "They contained nothing in which there were not to be seen superstition and lies of the devil", Landa wrote. The burning "caused them much affliction" and "they regretted it to an amazing degree", he observed.

It is not surprising that the earliest forms of Christo-pagan syncretism among the Maya were associated with the cross, which was a symbol of major significance in both Maya and Christian religions. The Crucifixion seems to have been interpreted by the Maya as a new kind of human sacrifice. There are numerous reports of Maya human sacrifice after the conquest which may have been regarded as the type of collective disaster which required the supreme sacrifice. Christian teaching stimulated the native innovation of crucifying the victim who was nailed or tied to a cross. The body was sometimes removed from the cross before the heart was torn out. In other cases the cross with the body still on it was thrown into the local *cenote*. Roys believes that postconquest crucifixion was associated with the worship of the rain gods and the cenote cult of human sacrifice in Yucatan.[47]

Most of the native priests who performed human sacrifices after the conquest had Christian names, indicating that they had been baptized as Catholics. Toral reports that the lords and caciques who participated in human sacrifices had been baptized and "very well instructed in the matters of our Holy Catholic Faith".[48]

The instruction in matters of the Holy Catholic Faith produced an attitude of skepticism among the Maya as indicated in the words of a native priest who presided at the crucifixion of two little girls in the church at Sotuta about 1557: "Let these girls die crucified as did Jesus Christ, who they say was Our Lord but we do not know if this is so."[49]

[46] Ibid., pp. 79-83.
[47] Ibid., p. 116.
[48] Ibid., pp. 117, 119.
[49] Ibid., p. 116.

After the girls were taken down from the crosses, their hearts were offered to pagan idols. In the town of Tecoh two boys were nailed to a cementery cross surrounded by idols which received offerings of hearts.

Following Landa's death in 1579, there began in Yucatan a period of outward compliance with Catholic requirements such as baptism, ritual calendar observances, veneration of saints, and cessation of public idolatry in towns ruled by the Spaniards. When Fray Alonso Ponce visited the Yucatan Peninsula in 1588 he observed that the Maya of Yucatan were a "pious people" whereas those of Quintana Roo were "idolaters, apostates, and renegades."[50]

Quintana Roo had been divided among the conquerors in accordance with the *encomienda* system which encompassed the teaching of Christianity to the natives. By the end of the 16th century Quintana Roo had been almost deserted by the Spaniards owing to the poverty of the isolated forest region and the frequent Indian revolts against the encomenderos. In 1639 the few Indians living in encomienda villages burned churches, desecreated Catholic images and returned to the jungle, where they practiced their own religion which by that time probably included elements of Catholicism.

It was in the pagan environment of Quintana-Roo that the cult of the talking cross began at the town of Chan Santa Cruz in 1850, three years after the beginning of the War of the Castes started by the Maya to win autonomy and rid the peninsula of whites. The Indian cause had seemed hopeless until the miraculous appearance of a small talking cross carved on a tree trunk. It claimed to be the Trinity sent to earth by God the Father to help the Maya in their rebellion against the whites. The talking cross was the invention of a Meztizo aided by an Indian ventriloquist who answered questions addressed to the cross. When a Mexican government expedition destroyed the cross and killed the ventroloquist, three new talking crosses came to replace the old one. The new crosses were identified as daughters of the original and were dressed in Indian costumes. Juan de la Cruz Pue, one of the early priests of the three crosses, spoke of himself as the Son of God. The names Jesus Christ and Juan de la Cruz came to be synonyms in Quintana Roo. Talking crosses appeared in other villages but their prestige was not as great as that of Santa Cruz, which became a pilgri-

[50] A. Villa Rojas, *The Maya of East Central Quintana Roo*, no. 559, (Washington: Carnegie Institute, 1945), p. 15; Jiménez Moreno, "Indians of America", p. 77.

mage center.[51] Talking idols began to appear in Chiapas in 1867 just before the Tzotzil revolt. One of the inventors of the pottery idols told the Indians that they need not adore images representing non-Indians. Instead he proposed to crucify an Indian boy so the natives would have a Lord of their own to worship. The crucifixion took place in 1868.[52]

The most distinctive aspects of contemporary folk religion in the Yucatan Peninsula are: the emphasis on worship of crosses, which are usually personified; the persistence of pagan gods and rites; and the insignificance of the Guadalupinist cult.

The durability of pagan gods and rites is most evident in Quintana Roo, where Catholic forms are also an integral part of local religion. Native religion is focused on the cult of the cross and the cult of pagan agricultural deities, particularly the rain gods called chaacs. There are very few images of saints in Quintana Roo communities where the "santos" are crosses. "The saints are not intimately connected with the lives of the people", Villa Rojas writes, "but the pagan deities and the crosses enter into their acts and beliefs at almost every point."[53]

The patron cross of the village is regarded as the protector of the whole community and usually has performed many miracles. The whole village participates in the fiesta for the patron cross, which is honored with offerings of candles and food. When a village calamity, such as an epidemic, occurs, the people appeal to the patron cross for aid. In theory all crosses act as intermediaries of God and Christ but a cross may acquire so much power that it comes to act in its own right. When community ritual obligations have been neglected, the patron cross may inflict punishment on the entire village by sending a drought or plague. In short, the patron cross fulfills the same functions performed by the village patron saint in other parts of Mexico. Sometimes the patron cross has an even closer relationship to the villagers since it may communicate with them. The talking cross of Chan Santa Cruz has lost its power of speech but now writes letters to make known its wishes or give counsel to those who seek it. In Quintana Roo the cross is housed in the church and worshipped primarily in a Christian context.

[51] Villa Rojas, *The Maya*, p. 22.

[52] D.E. Thompson, *Maya Paganism and Christianity: A History of the Fusion of Two Religions*, Middle American Research Institue, no. 19 (New Orleans: Tulane University, 1954), pp. 18-20.

[53] Villa Rojas, *The Maya*, p. 101.

Cross worship is widely established throughout the Maya area in connection with both Christian and pagan rites. In northwest Guatemala crosses are divinities who see, think, hear, and communicate through a shaman-priest. The most important cross in the village of Jacaltenango is the huge one standing outside the church. Within the church the cross appears very little. Small crosses are found on hills, caves, ridges, town boundaries, and at the four corners of the village. In Santa Eulalia ancestral crosses kept on home altars pass from father to son through many generations. Images or pictures of saints may also be kept on the home altar but they are entirely secondary and subordinate to the family cross.[54] Among the Chorti of eastern Guatemala the cross is sometimes thought of as a deity which is venerated and adorned but nothing is ever asked of it.[55]

The Chorti and the Mam-speaking Indians of Santiago Chimaltenango in northwestern Guatemala value saint worship more than cross worship. But even in these Maya religions the saints seem less important than in the Valley of Mexico. In Maya folk religion the Catholic saints must share their honors with pagan deities. There is no Maya saint who fuses Christianity and paganism like the Aztec Virgin of Guadalupe. The Mother of all Mexicans is a foreigner to the Maya.

The worship of pagan agricultural deities still constitutes the core of Maya folk religion in rural areas. Of these pagan deities, the most important are the ancient rain gods called chaacs and the wind gods called pauahtuns. The most significant pattern of Christo-pagan syncretism in Yucatan folk religion is the compartmentalization of Christian and pagan cults. Pagan rites dedicated to Maya agricultural deities are performed by a shaman-priest called an *h-men*, whose prayers are said in the native tongue. Catholic rites are performed by a native chanter who recites prayers from the Catholic liturgy addressed to God, Christ, and various saints. The offerings made to Christian divinities are different from those made to pagan deities, and the rites of the two cults are usually performed in different places. Both pagan

[54] O. LaFarge and D. Byers, *The Year Bearer's People*, Middle American Research Institue, no. 3 (New Orleans: Tulane University, 1931), pp. 185-190; O. La Farge, *Santa Eulalia: The Religion of a Cochumatan Indian Town* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 114.

[55] C. Wagley, *The Social and Religious Life of a Guatemalan Village* American Anthropological Association, mem. 71 (1949), pp. 390-431.

and Christian cults function to secure supernatural aid in obtaining rain, growing crops, and restoring health. They are complementary ways of dealing with the supernatural.[56]

The functioning of the two interrelated cults is illustrated in the rain ceremonies of Chan Kom and X-Cacal.[57] During a drought in Chan Kom the people first held a novena before the patron saint to ask for rain. The nine evenings of prayer were led by a chanter with laymen participating. Special foods were placed on the altar of the saint. Some rain fell but not enough. Next prayers were addressed to the cross and God, but the drought persisted. Then the men of Chan Kom secured the services of a h-men to lead a ceremony dedicated to the chaacs. Some Yucatan villages still hold this *cha'chaac* ceremony at the local cenote where pieces of sacrificed turkey are thrown into the water where the rain gods dwell.

Pagan and Christian rain ceremonies in X-Cacal are performed simultaneously at separate altars in the same church. The h-men, beside his altar, addresses the pagan deities while the civil leader, called *Nohoch Tata*, kneels beside the other altar reciting Catholic prayers. There is no conflict between the two cults which are followed by the same congregation.

Whether or not the Maya themselves recognize a distinction betwen the two cults is a matter of debate. I would be inclined to agree with Villa Rojas' opinion that the natives do make a distinction but not in terms of historical origins. The very fact that both Christian and pagan rites are performed for the same purpose indicates that the Maya recognized two sets of deities who should be separately propitiated in different ways.

The compartmentalization of the two cults does not entail a rigid separation of all Christian and pagan elements in Maya folk religion. Through a process of incremental syncretism Catholic saints have been added to the Maya pantheon of nature gods. The chaacs are arranged in a hierarchy headed by St. Michael Archangel. This saint gives orders for rain to the captain of the chaacs who leads the pagan rain gods stationed at the four cardinal points of the sky. When the rain gods ride through the sky pouring rain from their calabashes they are

[56] Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), pp. 104-08.

[57] Robert Redfield and A. Villa Rojas, *Chan Kom: A Maya Village*, no. 448 (Washington: Carnegie Institue, 1934), p. 139; Redfield, *Folk Culture*: p. 107.

sometimes accompanied by the Virgin Mary, who has become a guardian of the maize and is often invoked by the h-men in his prayers to the chaacs. The Chorti of Guatemala attribute the production of rain to similar pagan deities known as *"chicchans"* who occupy the four world directions and bear the individual names of Christian saints.[58] The pauahtuns, Yucatan wind gods associated with the four directions, are called St. Dominic, St. Gabriel, St. James, and Mary Magdalene.[59]

Maya ethics are pagan. Man's primary obligations are making *milpa* and propitiating nature gods who run the universe and grant the temporal necessities of life. Gods who do not receive the proper offerings send sickness, drought, or other misfortunes to punish the negligent individual or community. The cessation of human sacrifice has not interfered with the orderly running of the universe by Maya agricultural deities, who are now content with animal sacrifices.

My analysis of the reasons for the contrasting processes and patterns of syncretism traced in this article may be summarized as follows:

The conquest decapitated the Aztec value system focused on war and human sacrifice, producing a strain for new religious orientations. This strain culminated in the fusion of Spanish and Indian traditions embodied in Guadalupinist Catholicism. The successful integration of the old and new religions was greatly facilitated by the paternalistic guidance of capable Franciscans who taught Christianity in the Nahuatl tongue; established warm personal relations with the Aztec, and encouraged certain types of religious syncretism. But the most important stimulus for fusion was the appearance of the dark-skinned Virgin of Guadalupe which enabled the Aztec to Indianize the white man's religion and make it their own.

The Maya value system focused on agriculture and worship of agricultural deities survived the conquest virtually intact to become a backbone of resistance to radical religious change. This resistance was strangthened by hatred of the Spaniards, whose missionary effort was marred by inability to communicate with the natives, cruel punishment of idolátors, and burning of Maya pueblos. Indoctrination of the Maya was often left to baptized natives who returned to paganism in scattered and isolated villages seldom visited

[58] C. Wisdom, The *Chorti* Indians of Guatemala (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), pp. 392-95.

[59] Thompson, *Maya Paganism*, p. 28.

by Catholic priests. Since the Maya of Yucatan felt no need for a new religion, they clung to their own, adding only those elements of Catholicism which could be accepted without impairing native religious belief.

Although the Maya and the Aztec adopted Christianity by different processes of syncretism, the contemporary folk religions of the two groups share many similarities based on their common heritages from paganism and Catholicism. The most obvious of these similarities are the Catholic ritual observances found not only in Middle America but throughout Latin America. Both Nahuatl and Maya folk religions adapted the Catholic saints and Christ to their ancient pattern of polytheism. Both folk religions worship images which are believed to possess supernatural powers and are treated like persons. Both retain a belief in dual-natured deities who grant men benefits and take them away at will. Both preserve an essentially pagan concept of ethics. In both Nahuatl and Maya folk cultures religion functions as an explanation of the ordering of the universe, a channel for dealing with the supernatural forces of nature, a focus of community activities, a means of aesthetic expression, and a road to prestige.

The Kabīr Panth: Heretics to Hindus

David N. Lorenzen

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were crucial to the evolution of Hinduism in North India. From at least the period of the Guptas (ca. 300-500 A.D.), if not earlier, the religious life of the region was dominated by an officially patronized Hindu "orthodoxy," both Śaivite and Vaisnava, controlled by a Brahman priesthood whose intellectual achievements were codified in Sanskrit. Although the dispersed, individualistic structure of Hindu tradition was maintained through village priests and wandering ascetics, there was a shift towards more highly structured religious institutions, most notably the large monasteries and temple complexes which became increasingly important from about the ninth or tenth centuries. Under Turko-Afghan and later Mughal rule these partly state-dependent institutions seem to have suffered a general decline in their fortunes as did, for the most part, the associated Brahman priesthood and its Sanskrit-based intellectual traditions. Instead, the individualistic current of Hindu tradition reasserted itself in the form of a simpler, devotional religion whose main exponents were wandering saints (*sant*), many among them non-Brahmans, who preached in vernacular languages.

In terms of subsequent influence, the most important of these sants were Tulsī-dās (1532-1623), Mīrā-bāī (1498-1536), Gurū Nānak (1469-1538), Kabīr (?1398-1518), Vallabhācārya (1479-1530), Sūr-dās (?1483-1563), and Caitanya (1485-1533). If the discussion is extended to Maharashtra, the name of Tukārām (1607-49) should also be mentioned. The followers of some, though not all, of these and other sants soon organized themselves into what can loosely be called cults *(sampradāya)* and sects *(panth)*. Many of these sampradāyas and panths still survive, as do others founded subsequently either as offshoots or schisms, or as new groups following new charismatic leaders.

From the point of view of cultural history, a key question about the rise of this devotional *(bhakti)* movement, in both its sectarian and

non-sectarian manifestations, is to what extent the conquest and domination of India, first by Turk and Afghan Muslims from about the beginning of the thirteenth century and later by Turkish Mughals in the sixteenth, effected or affected this religious change.

One aspect of this subject, to which this paper will primarily address itself, is that of the evolution of the Kabīr panth, during about 250 years of Mughal rule followed by about 200 years of British colonial rule and thirty more of independent secular rule. Although government policy in British and independent India has been to maintain religious neutrality, in practice this has increased Hindu cultural domination.

I will argue that, although the more genuine text collections attributed to Kabīr show him rejecting both Muslim and Hindu religious traditions, the early history of the sect (panth) established in his name —as far as it can be reconstructed— suggests that it was strongly influenced by the Hindu cultural environment, even in the halcyon days of the Mughal empire. Today, nearly all branches (*śākhā*) of the panth are thoroughly Hinduized. Information I collected at the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh and other Kabīr centers in Varanasi in 1976 shows that there has recently been a trend to Sanskritization as well, though there has also been a partly complementary, partly contradictory tendency to adopt a more modern, westernized outlook.

The religious consequences of the Turko-Afghan conquest cannot be easily analyzed in a comprehensive fashion. Given an irremediable lack of certain essential types of sources, the task may be an impossible one. Nonetheless, certain broad generalizations can be made. Most salient is the observation that the *direct* religious consequences of the conquest were remarkably few. Most significantly, the outright conversions to Islam never included more than a minority of the population, though in absolute numbers the conversions were quite substantial. The exceptions to this rule are, first, the Northwest, what is today Pakistan, where contact with Islamic civilization was more direct and prolonged and Hindu civilization more subject to constant disruption through invasion; and second, eastern Bengal, today Bangladesh, which was also somewhat isolated from the main Hindu centers and was the time of the Muslim conquest partly dominated by a degenerate form of Buddhism. The heartland of North India, the rich agricultural plains extending from the East Punjab to Bengal, remained basically Hindu, except for certain portions of the ruling classes, many of whom were earlier converted Central Asian and

Persian immigrants or their descendents, and certain low, mostly artisan castes resident in or near major cities. In the Deccan and far South, where Muslim domination was more sporadic and less complete, Islamic influence was correspondingly weaker. Among the converted, and even among the Muslim immigrants, the basic Hindu social institution, the caste, was preserved . . introduced, while the religious beliefs and practices of the converts, particularly those of the lower castes, were far from completely Islamicized.

Although Hinduism accepted little influence from Islam, in the sense of direct borrowings and syncretism, several important medieval religious movements were, to a limited extent, exceptions to this rule, namely those associated with or descended from Guru Nānak and Kabīr. For this reason, they have particular relevance for any discussion of the religious effects of the Muslim conquest.

During the first half of the present century the general trend of scholarly discussion was to emphasize the contribution of Islam to these movements. An implicit aim of many works with this viewpoint, such as Yusuf Husain's *L'Inde mystique au moyen age,* was to counter communalist sentiments by praising a supposed creative synthesis of Islamic and Hindu cultures. As early as 1936, however, it had been cogently argued by P.D. Barthwal that Nānak and Kabīr and most of their successors were influenced much more by Hindu than by Muslim tradition. In the case of Kabīr, although he was undoubtedly born a Muslim, his principal religious inheritance was from the Hindu Nāth *sampradāya,* not Islam. His knowledge of Islam was shown to be limited and at times mistaken. Subsequent studies by H.P. Dvivedī (1942), P. Caturvedī (1951), and C. Vaudeville (1957, 1974) have supported this assessment.[1]

The better modern historians of the Sikh movement, such as J.S. Grewal and W.H. McLeod, are in general agreement that, in contrast to Kabīr, Gurū Nānak had considerable knowledge of Islam, or at least of Punjabi Sufism, but that his most notable religious antecedents were the bhakti sants.[2] Whether Kabīr himself directly

[1] See P.D. Barthwal, *The Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry* (Benares: India Book Shop, 1936); H.P. Dvivedī, *Kabīra,* rev. ed. (Delhi: rājakamāla prakāśana, 1971); P. Caturvedī, *Uttarī bhārata kī saṃta-paraṃparā,* 2d ed. (Allahabad: līḍara presa, 1964); C. Vaudeville, *Kabīr Granthāvalī (Doha)* (Pondichéry: L'Institut Français D' Indologie, 1957) and *Kabīr* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[2] W.H. McLeod, "Guru Nanak and Kabir," *Punjab History Conference*

influenced Nānak is uncertain, but the presence of a large number of Kabīr's compositions in the bible of the Sikhs, the *Ādi Granth*, testifies to his influence in the later development of Sikhism.

In one respect, it is my impression that modern scholars may have somewhat over-Hinduized Kabīr and perhaps Nānak as well. For the purpose of subsequent discussion, however, I will refer only to Kabīr, since I am not qualified to discuss Nānak in detail. What I would like to object to is the tendency to see Kabīr merely as a Hindu reformer and to underestimate the extent to which he parts company with Hinduism altogether. All the bhakti sants did make at least indirect attacks on external ritual, simple-minded idolatry, and the more noxious manifestations of the caste system, but the vehemence of Kabīr's satires seems to go beyond this to attack Hinduism itself and not simply its exterior practices. If nothing else, the existence of Islam offered him the precedent and possibility of propagating a religious message independent of Hinduism. In fact, his satires consistently link and ridicule the hypocrisy of both Hinduism and Islam, as the following example illustrates:

> If you are a Brahman, born from a Brahman woman,
> Then why did you not arrive by another orifice?
> If you are a Muslim, born from a Muslim woman,
> Then why were you not circumcised in the womb?
> No one is [by nature] low.
> He is low on whose tongue Rām is not.[3]

In the songs and couplets, which make a positive as opposed to satiric statement of his faith, Kabīr repeatedly refuses to be bound by exclusively Hindu or Muslim names of God. E. Underhill and R. Tagore have beautifully rendered one of the best of such verses, which occurs with variations in several different text collections:

> If God be within the mosque, then to whom does this world belong?
> If Rām be within the image which you find upon your pilgrimage, then who is there to know what happens without?
> Hari is in the East: Allāh is in the West. Look within your heart, for there you will find both Karīm and Rām;

Proceedings (Patiala: 1966), pp. 87-92, and his *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968); and J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History* (Chandigarh: Punjab University, 1969).

[3] Kabīra-dāsa, *Kabīra-granthāvalī*, ed. Mātaprasāda Gupta (Agra: pramāṇika prakāśana, 1969), *gauḍī* 41.

All the men and women of the world are His living forms. Allāh and of Rām: He is my Guru, Kabīr is the child of He is my Pīr.[4]

More decisive for the separation of Kabīr from both Hindu and Muslim tradition is a couplet from the *Ādi Granth:*

nā hama hindū nā musalamāna
alaha rāma ke piṇḍa parāna
I am not Hindu nor Muslim
Allāh-Rām is the breath of [my] body.[5]

Many years after Kabīr's death the independence of his message was still recognized by Nābhā-dās, who wrote the following comment in about 1600 A.D.:

> Kabir refused to acknowledge caste distinctions or to recognize the authority of the six Hindu schools of philosophy nor did he set any store by the four divisions of life *(āśramas)* prescribed for Brahmans. He held that religion *(dharma)* without devotion *(bhakti)* was no religion at all *(adharma)*, and that asceticism, fasting, and almsgiving had no value if not accompanied by adoration *(bhajana)*. By means of *ramainīs*, *śabdīs*, and *sākhīs*, he imparted religious instruction to Hindus and Turks alike. He showed no partiality to either but gave teaching beneficial to all. With determination he spoke and never tried to please the world. Kabir refused to acknowledge caste distinctions and the six systems of philosophy.[6]

[4] *One Hundred Poems of Kabīr* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 72; first published in 1916. The text used fo this translation is taken from a collection of songs attributed to Kabīr, edited by K.M. Sen. It is most conveniently found in H.P. Dvivedī, *Kabīra*, pp. 276-77, no. 69. Other versions are found in: (1) *Kabīra-granthāvalī*, *āsāvarī* 52; (2) *Kabīra-bījaka*, ed. Śukadeva Siṃha (Allhabad: nīlābha prakāśana, 1972), *śabda* 97[52]; and (3) *Santa Kabīra*, ed. R.K. Varmā, 5th ed. (Allahabad: Sāhitya bhavana, 1966), *vibhāsa prabhātī* 2. The last-mentioned is a *nāgarī* edition of the compositions of Kabīr found in the *Ādi Granth*.

[5] *Ādi Granth, Bhairau Mahalā*. 5. This reference and text were kindly given to me by W.H. McLeod. An alternative translation of the second line might be: "I offer *piṇḍa* to Allāh-Rām." Other texts of Kabīr from the *Ādi Granth* are most conveniently found collected in the nagari edition of R.K. Varmā.

[6] Nābhā-dāsa, *Bhakta-mālā, chappay* 60, as translated by Vaudeville, *Kabīr*, p. 30. For the text, I have consulted the fifth edition of the navalakiśara presa edition (Lucknow: 1969), which also contains Priyadāsa's commentary.

One other fact which should be mentioned in this connection is the obvious one that Kabīr was born of Muslim weaver *(julāhā)* parents. The strong Nāth influence in his compositions has led H.P. Dvivedī and other scholars to speculate that his family had only recently been converted to Islam and may have belonged originally to a caste of married Nāth *jogīs*. The existence of such jogīs, many of whom are weavers, is mentioned in a number of nineteenth century ethnographical works. Even if Dvivedī's theory is correct, however, there is no escaping the fact that Kabīr's Muslim parentage means he cannot have been a Hindu.

The little information about Kabīr's life that can be regarded as historically credible comes from his own verses, or rather from the verses attributed to him in three separate collections of his compositions which date, as collections, from sometime in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Two of these, the Rajasthani collection, preserved principally in the so-called *Kabīr-granthāvalī*, and the collection in the Sikh *Ādi Granth*, have generally been judged older and more authentic by scholars than the third, the *Bījak*, which is the text accepted as genuine by the Kabīr panth.[7] Another source is the scattered references to Kabīr in verses attributed to contemporary sants, especially Raidās (Ravi-dās).

From these references little more is learned than that Kabīr was born in a family of Muslim weavers (julāhā), as already mentioned, and that he spent most of his life in Varanasi, though he died, and perhaps was born, at a place called Maghar in the Basti District near Gorakhpur. There is some suggestion, particularly in the *Ādi Granth* verses, that Kabīr was married and had a son named Kamāl, but the evidence is ambiguous and has been rejected by the Kabīr panth, which prefers to regard him as having been celibate all his life. His dates cannot be directly determined from these sources and are the subject of a still unresolved scholarly debate. The best that can be said is simply that he flourished sometime in the fifteenth century.

The many legends about Kabīr found in later works are of limited historical credibility, but they do give important evidence for the early Hinduization of the Kabīr panth. As examples of this process, I would like to examine two of these legendary episodes in more detail: first the birth of Kabīr and second his initiation by Rāmānand.

The appearance of the first Hinduized accounts of Kabīr's birth

[7] For the *Bījak* see *Kabīra-bījaka*.

cannot be dated with any precision. Basically, there are two different versions of the legend. In one, Kabīr is made the abandoned son of a Brahman widow. In one of the variants of this version, this widow had been mistakenly blessed with a child by Rāmānand, Kabīr's future guru. The child was found on the bank of a pond at Lahartara near Banaras by a Muslim weaver (julāhā) and his wife. Although several variants of this version of the legend have been recorded by modern authors such as Śyāmasundar Dās, P.D. Barthwal, and Mahārāj Rāghurājāsiṃha, it is not found in early sources.[8]

The second version makes Kabīr an incarnation of Visnu, who descended in the form of a new-born child directly on a lotus in the Lahartara pond and was then found and adopted by the Muslim weaver-couple as in the previous version. One variant makes him the offspring of an unnamed celestial deity, a drop of whose semen accidentally fell on the Lahartara lotus and promptly developed into a radiant child.[9] A modern Kabīr panth author, Rāmanandan Dās, has collected several references to this legend, the most important of which, from a chronological point of view, is the following couplet attributed to Garībdās (b. 1717):

> *gagana maṃḍala se utare sadguru puruṣa kabīra jalaja māṃhi paudhana kiyo duhum dīna ke pīra*
>
> The world-spirit, the sadguru Kabīr, descended from the celestial realm. Alighted on a lotus, he removed the pain of the wretched.[10]

Rāmanandan Dās also quotes two Sanskrit verses said to be from the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* which explicitly make Kabīr an incarnation of Viṣṇu:

> When India becomes oppressed by foreigners, Hari [= Viṣṇu] will descend [to earth] in the Kali age, under the name of Kabīr, to teach men the good path. In the Kali age, in order to tell the truth and free men from the bondage of the division of castes, etc., [he] will appear on a lotus in the form of Kabīr.[11]

[8] See K. Dvivedī, *Kabīra aura Kabīra paṃtha: Tulanātmaka adhyayana* (Allahabad: hindī sāhitya sammelana, 1965), pp. 71-72.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[10] Rāmanandana Dāsa, *Śrī sadguru Kabīra* (Satamalapura: śrīmān mahanta rāmāvatara Sāhaba, 1974), p. 15 [my translation]. A lengthy version of this legend is also found in a valuable recent work by another Kabīr panth author, Gaṅgāśarana Śāstrī, entitled *Kabīra jīvanacaritra* (Varanasi: kabīravānī prakāśana kendra, 1976).

[11] Rāmanandana Dāsa, *Śrī sadguru Kabīra*, p. 15.

Rāmanandan Dās himself accepts the tradition that the miraculously manifested child was adopted by the Muslim weaver Nīrū and his wife Nīmā, and also claims that Nīrū was originally a Brahman who converted to Islam and took up the trade of weaving in order to have a means of livelihood.

For a non-believer, the legends associated with Kabīr's birth are clearly inventions. Kabīr's association with Rāmānanda is somewhat more difficult to dismiss out of hand. This tradition seems to be an old one, since it was apparently already accepted by the early authors Harirām Vyās, Anant Dās and Nābhā Dās. On the other hand, in none of the three basic collections of Kabīr's verses does he mention his human guru by name. Only one verse in the three collections mentions (perhaps) Rāmānand. It is from the *Bījak* and is itself one of the reasons some scholars consider that this collection is marred by interpolations:

> *Rāmānanda rāmarasa māte*
> Rāmānand became drunk with the nectar of Rām.[12]

One verse from a more modern collection of Kabīr's compositions does explicitly refer to Rāmānand as Kabīr's guru:

> *kāsī meṃ hama pragata bhaye haiṃ rāmānanda cetāye*
> I was made manifest in Kāsī and enlighted by Rāmānand.[13]

Most scholars doubt that this latter verse is a genuine composition of Kabīr. Even if there is little in Kabīr's own writing to connect him directy with Rāmānand, the testimony of Harirām Vyās. Anat Dās. and Nābhā Dās, together with the weight of the Kabīr panth tradition, is difficult to dismiss. On the other land, there are additional difficulties in accepting that Kabīr could have been the initiated disciple of Rāmānand. First comes the question of dates. Historically, Rāmānand is a peculiarly shadowy figure, but he is usually assigned to the fourteenth century, whereas Kabīr clearly belongs to the fifteenth, even if his dates are uncertain. If Kabīr was initiated by Rāmānand, at best it must have been at an early age. A

[12] *Kabīra-bījaka, śabda* 77 [76]. Shukdeo Singh and Linda Hess have translated this line simply as: "Drunk on the juice of Rām's bliss." See their *Selections from the Bījak of Kabīr* (Varanasi: kabir bani prakashan kendra, 1977), p. 28.

[13] The verse is found in H. P. Dvivedī. *Kabīra*, pp. 259-60, no. 29.

more important obstacle to accepting Rāmānand as Kabīr's guru is the simple fact that Kabīr was born a Muslim, whereas Rāmānand, according to tradition, was a Brahman spiritually descended from the great South Indian theologian Rāmānuja (? 1017-1137). Tradition does assign several other low caste disciples to Rāmānand but even if this tradition is correct [which is not certain] the initiation of a low caste Muslim is, on the face of it, unlikely.

The hagiographers of Kabīr recognized this difficulty in a rather fanciful legend which attempted to explain how the initiation occurred. An early version of this legend occurs in Priyadās's commentary, written in 1712 **A.D.**, to Nābhā Dās's *Bhaktamālā*. According to this, one day Kabīr heard a voice from the sky telling him to wear the *tilak* of the Rāmānandīs and make Rāmānand his guru. When Kabīr objected that Rāmānand would not accept him, since he was a non-Hindu *(mleccha)*, the voice told him to lie down in Rāmānand's path, when the latter was going to the Ganges to bathe in the early morning darkness. Kabīr did so and, when Rāmānand accidentally stepped on him and shouted "Rām Rām" in surprise, Kabīr accepted this as his *mantra* of initiation. Later, when Rāmānand learned that Kabīr was claiming to be his disciple, Rāmānand called him and asked, from behind a curtain, how Kabīr could make such a claim. Kabīr reminded him of the incident on the banks of the Ganges, and then praised Rām. With this, he pleased his would-be guru and Rāmānand embraced him and formally accepted him as a disciple.[14]

A still earlier variant of this legend appears in the *Dabistan*, attributed to Mohsan Fani, a work written in Persian about the middle of the seventeenth century. One notable feature of the *Dabistan* account is that, though it explicitly recognizes Kabīr as a Hindu *vairāgī*, it also mentions his having "visited the best of the Muselmans and Hindus" at the time "when he was in search of a spiritual guide." Finding none of them able to satisfy him, Kabīr came "to an old man of bright genius, the Brahman Rāmānanda." The remainder of the account is roughly similar to that of Priyadās.[15]

[14] See Nābhā-dāsa, *Bhakta-mālā*, pp. 480-82. See also Śāstrī, *Kabīra*, pp. 17-28. This latter work also quotes Anantadāsa's version of the legend, which is otherwise unpublished.

[15] *The Dabistan or School of Manners*, trans. D. Shea and A. Troyer, vol. 2 (Paris: 1843), pp. 186-88

However charming this story may be, its historical accuracy is uncertain at best. In the absence of better evidence, I would guess that Kabīr may well have been for a time a follower of Rāmānand or one of his successors, but not a formally initiated disciple. Certainly, the yogic and tantric esotericism associated with the Nāth sampradāya, which seems to be Kabīr's principal intellectual inheritance, is unlikely to have come from Rāmānand. The formal and exclusive relationship with his guru postulated by tradition is, in all probability, simply another step in the Hinduization and Sanskritization of Kabīr by his followers and hagiographers.

The history of the Kabīr panth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is only relatively better known than that of the sixteenth and seventeenth, although valuable pioneering research has been done by Paraśurām Caturvedī and Kedārnāth Dvivedī.[16] From their accounts, several general tendencies seem to have been at work during this period. One was the success of the panth in surviving as an active religious force and gradually extending its influence throughout most of Bihar, parts of Nepal and Madhyapradesh, and Gujarat. In Rajasthan the related Dādū panth, founded by Dādū Dayāl (1544-1603), flourished, while in the Punjab, the Sikhs became a dominant power, politically as well as religiously.

Another characteristic of the period was the constant formation of new sub-sects (śākhā) of the panth, often created as a result of problems in the succession to the headship of monasteries. According to Kabīr panthī tradition, already at the time of the death of Kabīr, there was a dispute between his Muslim and Hindu followers over the possession of his ashes. Today there are two graves *(samādhi)* of Kabīr at Magahar, one Muslim and one Hindu. Kabīr panth tradition attributes the formation of several of the existing Hindu śākhās of the panth to Kabīr's immediate disciples, namely Suratgopāl (KabīrCaurā śākhā or *mūlgaddī*), Bhagūdās (Dhanautī śākhā), Dharm-dās (Chattisgaḍh śākhā), Jagū-dās (Sivpur-Bidupur śākhā), and Tatvā and Jīvā (Phatuhā śākhā). In at least one case, that of Dharm-dās, the tradition is suspect. It is likely that the formation of his śākhā took place more than one hundred years after the death of Kabīr.[17]

Whether or not the other śākhās just mentioned really do date back

[16] See P. Caturvedī, *Uttarī bhārat kī saṃta-paraṃparā*, and K. Dvivedī, *Kabīra aura Kabīra-pamtha*.

[17] See K. Dvivedī, *Kabīra aura-Kabīra-paṃtha*, p. 173.

to the time of Kabīr's immediate disciples or not is impossible to determine. In any case, new śākhās and subśākhās have constantly appeared, from the time of the creation of the panth until today. If to these groups we add the names of other panths indirectly related in one way or another to Kabīr, such as the Dādū panth, Sikh dharma, Garībdās panth, Śiv-Nārāyaṇ panth, etc., the number becomes very large indeed.[18]

Another general tendency was the gradual disappearance of the Muslim section of the panth, never very numerous, and the continued Sanskritization of the Hindu section. Rather than attempt the impossible task of reconstructing each step of this process, I would like to offer a description of some of the Sanskritized and Hinduized traits of the present day panth. These comments will be based in large part on interviews done in 1976 in the various Kabīr panth monasteries in and near Banaras, especially the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh.

Before continuing, I would like to make a brief disgression to clarify my use of the terms Hinduization and Sanskritization. As should be clear from the previous discussion, I have used Hinduization to refer to the integration or assimilation of a non-Hindu religious tradition, in this case the tradition associated with Kabīr, within Hinduism. Sanskritization is a somewhat more difficult term to use, since it has been the subject of much scholarly discussion and redefinition since it was first coined by M.N. Srinivas, in his study of the Coorgs of South India (1952). Srinivas' first formulation was criticized for not allowing for the possibility of Sanskritization in the direction of *kṣatriya* and *vaiśya* models, not just Brahman ones. Srinivas accepted this criticism, but in a more recent formulation (1966) has introduced a new confusion between ritual and secular rank and, hence, between modernization or westernization and Sanskritization. In this paper I am limiting the use of Sanskritization to refer to the emulation, by ritually lower castes, of the behavior of ritually higher castes, and only include the adoption of traits sanctioned by classical, i.e. primarily post-Gupta, Hindu tradition. Thus, if a low caste group takes to learning Sanskrit, it is undergoing Sanskritization; if it takes to

[18]For one list, see J.N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1967), p. 334; first published in 1920. For a more detailed treatment, see P. Caturvedī.

learning English, it is not, although the same upper-class group or groups may be serving as a model for both activities.[19]

There is, today, no doubt whatsoever that the Kabīr panth is a Hindu sect. Gaṅgāśaraṇ Śāstrī, administrative head of the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh and one of the panth's most learned monks, says simply: "I am a Hindu, I am a Vaiṣṇava." He does admit that Kabīr was less of a Hindu than the present members of the panth, but does not attach any negative significance to the fact.

Wescott, one of the Western scholars who studied the sect first hand early in this century, mentions the existence of a Muslim section of the panth centered at Magahar. If such a section existed in his time, it does no longer. There is a possibility that a few Muslim Kabir panthīs may be found elsewhere in northern India but there are none at Magahar. Of the many śākhās mentioned by K. Dvivedī, the only one which may still show some visible traces of Muslim influence is the so-called Kabīr-vaṃśī śākhā. Unfortunately, Dvivedī's description of this group is cursory. The Kabīr-vaṃśis are said to consider themselves descended from Kamālī, the daughter of Kabīr. By caste, they are Hindu Julāhās (properly, "Julāhā" refers to the large caste of Muslim weavers to which Kabīr belonged). Their main centers are at Merath, Ludhiyana and Huśiyarpur.

At Magahar there is a Muslim *pujārī* or *adhikārī* who manages the Muslim *rauzā* ("tomb") of Kabīr. In an interview he said he considered himself a Muslim, not a Kabīr panthī, and that there was no Muslim Kabīr panth so far as he knew. There are still a large number of Muslim Julāhās in Magahar, but they do not patronize the shrine. From the remarks of the pujārī, it was fairly evident that his main interest in his office was in the occasional offerings which were left by pilgrims, mostly Hindu Kabīr panthīs and Sikhs, and, more importantly, in the income from the agricultural lands still attached to the shrine. He inherited his office from his father and intends to pass it on to one of his sons.

The clearest examples of the Sanskritization of the Kabīr panth are

[19] The most important texts for the discussion about Sanskritization include: M.N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among The Coorgs of South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952); his "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 15(1956); his *Social Change in Modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); and J.F. Staal, "Sanskrit and Sanskritization," *Journal of Ansian Studies*, 22 (1963).

those that reflect the increasing use and study of the Sanskrit language by the monks. The administrative head of the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh claims that Sanskrit study is necessary, since without it one cannot properly understand Kabīr's theological doctrines nor the śāstras on which they are based. Although there is considerable truth to this statement, in the sense that a serious student of Indian religion needs to understand Sanskrit, there is also little doubt that Kabīr himself neither knew Sanskrit nor considered it useful for salvation. The following verse, taken from the *Bījak*, is typical:

> All [the learned] recite the Smṛtis, Vedas and Purāṇas, displaying a desire for enlightenment.
> But how can iron become gold
> if the *pāras* stone does not touch it?.[20]

In a verse from the *Ādi Granth*, Kabīr says:

> I do not study any science, nor do I know how to debate. Reciting and hearing the qualities of Hari, I have become mad.[21]

A traditional verse ascribed to Kabīr, and cited by Vaudeville, is quite unequivocal about the relative merits of Sanskrit and vernacular languages:

> *Kabīr*, Sanskrit is like well-water
> and the *bhāsā* is like live-water of the brook.[22]

In the contemporary Kabīr panth, a number of the monks are quite able Sanskrit scholars. Perhaps the foremost of these is Hanumaddās, a monk belonging to the Phatuhā (near Patna) śākhā. His published works include Hindi commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtra*, its *Śaṅkara-bhāṣya* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*, as well as Sanskrit commentaries on the latter work and on Kabīr's own *Bījak*. Another Kabīr panthī scholar, Brahmalīnamuni, of the Dharma-dās śākhā, has published a life of Kabīr in Sanskrit.[23]

[20] *Kabīra-bījaka*, *śabda* 14 [109].

[21] *Santa Kabīra*, *bilāvalu* 2.

[22] Vaudeville, *Kabīr*, p. 50.

[23] Hanumaddās' published works are available through the Śrīsadgurukavīraha-numatpustakālaya in Varanasi. Brahmalīnamuni's *Sadguruśrīkavīracaritam* was published by the author at Surat in 1960.

Next door to the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh in Varanasi, several śākhās of the panth have cooperated in financing a Sanskrit *pāṭhśālā*, the Śrī Kabīr Mahāmaṇḍal Sādhu Vidyālay, founded in 1913. The chief *paṇḍit* is a Brahman monk from the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh. The students include several monks of the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh plus a number of non-Kabīr panth boys from the neighborhood. The intruction is given in a traditional manner and is aimed at preparing the students for the official government Sanskrit exams. The paṇḍit of the pāṭhśālā also leads daily sessions of religious instruction in the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh. Although these are conducted in Hindi and usually are based on readings from Kabīr, the paṇḍit's own comments invariably include a heavy dose of traditional Vedantic theology.

The main feature of the evening service in the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh is a joint recitation of the *Bījak* and a text, entitled *Sandhyā Pāṭh*, containing compositions attributed to Kabīr and other more recent texts. One section is by the current administrative head of the monastery. Approximately one-twelfth of both the *Bījak* and the *Sandyā Pāṭh* is recited each night. When the cycle is completed, it is begun again from the beginning. Every night the recitation ends with the same composition, a hymn in praise of Kabīr, written in Sanskrit.[24]

The members of the Kabīr panth have always come primarily from the lower castes of Hindu society. Kabīr's compositions repeatedly express his distaste for the caste system and claim that religious merit is based on faith and religious insight, and not birth or learning. One of his couplets from the *Bījak*, frequently cited by modern Kabīr panthīs, reads;

bade te gaye baḍāpane, roma roma haṃkāra
sata guru kī paricaya binā, cāro barana camāra

The great are absorbed in their greatness, in every hair is pride;
Without knowledge of the Satguru, all four social classes are untouchables.[25]

It is impossible to determine to what extent caste consciousness was eliminated from the early Kabīr panth. What is clear is that the modern Kabīr panthīs have been unable to make a break with the

[24] *Sandhyā pātha* (Varanasi: ādi mūlagādī kabīra caurā matha, sam. 2031, [1974]), pp. 75-77.

[25] *Kabīra-bījaka, sākhī* 139.

system even to the limited extent that the Sikhs have. Kabīr panthī monks do express some personal adherence to Kabīr's rejection of caste, however. When asked about the different possibilities or rebirth, for instance, the usual reply is that all human births are equal and that bad actions will not lead to rebirth in a low caste, but to rebirth as an animal. In their social behavior and attitudes, however, they do not differ much from other Hindus. For instance, although the monks of the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh eat together, with the exception of the Brahman paṇḍit who takes him meals by himself (though he does accept the food prepared by the non-Brahman cooks), untouchable, lay Kabīr panthīs who visit the *maṭh* are fed just outside the monks' eating area. There were no monks from untouchable castes staying at the monastery during my visit, but the consensus of opinion was that they too would have to sit outside.

Most of the castes the Kabīr panthīs belong to have both Kabīr panthī and non-Kabīr panthī members. Among lay persons, intermarriage with non-Kabīr panthīs of each caste is usually permitted. Intermarriage with members of different castes is frowned on even if both bride and groom are Kabīr panthīs. Life crisis rites of the Kabīr panthīs are not normally performed by Kabīr panthī monks (there is no separate Kabīr panthī priesthood). Marriages, funerals, naming ceremonies and the like are perfomed according to rites customary in each caste. In some cases this means that they are performed by a Brahman priest.

The one ceremony which does serve to distinguish Kabīr panthīs from their non-Kabīr panthī caste-fellows is their initiation into the panth. This usually takes place in adolescence. The initiate should be given some instruction in the doctrines of the panth beforehand. In the ceremony he pledges his loyalty to his guru and receives from him a sacred mantra (religious formula) and a *kaṇṭhī*, or necklace with a single bead of *tulsī* wood. One decided departure from most other Hindu sectarian traditions is that in many castes married women are also initiated.

The daily routine of the monks at the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh is not significantly different from that of other Hindu monasteries except, of course, that the main subject of study is the compositions of Kabīr and his followers. The monks awake before dawn and perform their ablutions. About six-thirty a short ceremony is held in which all participate. The pujārī places garlands on the samādhi of Kabīr, on the so-called *Bījak* shrine, on the seat of the abbot *(mahant)*, and on

the samādhis of four past mahants which are in the courtyard. While gongs are rung the pujārī then perfoms *ārati* (a waving of incense) at the same places. The other monks, meanwhile, perform a circumbulation of the samādhi of Kabīr and then line up double file in front of the *Bījak* shrine. Afterwards, a monk chants from the *Bījak* through a loudspeaker audible over the entire neighborhood and then the monks attend the lessons of the paṇḍit, or study, or perform whatever particular duties they have. At about ten o'clock a simple but ample meal is served, usually consisting of rice, *chapattees, dal* and a vegetable curry. The monks do not take garlic and onions, and only rarely sweetened dishes or fruits. Each monk is expected to wash his own dishes except the mahant and the administrative head. In the afternoon the monks rest and study and do whatever necessary to keep the monastery in order. In the evening about six-thirty or seven, they perform the evening recitation, which lasts about an hour and a half. This is followed by more gongs while the pujārī again performs ārati, this time with a flaming lamp. Shortly afterward, the monks take their second meal, similar to the morning one, and then talk or go directly to bed.

The monks do not beg. Their unkeep is provided by the income from the monastery's agricultural lands, commercial properties, and occasional donations by lay devotees. With the exception of the mahants of the Chattisgaḍh section of the Dharmadās śākhā, the monks of all the principal śākhās are celibate. The most important section of the Dharmadās śākhā is no longer that centered at Dāmākheḍā in Chattisgaḍh district, but that at Karsiyā in Rāygaḍh district, M.P., which was established as a purely celibate section in 1933.[26]

According to Westcott, there were, in his time, a number of Kabīr panthī nuns living across the lane from the main monastery. The present Kabīr Caurā monks deny that nuns were ever allowed in their śākhā. They are said not to exist in any of the other śākhās with one exception. At the Śivpur monastery (near Varanasi) there is a solitary nun. She is greatly respected by the monks there; but is the subject of derisive comment by the monks of the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh.

The daily routine of the lay Kabīr panthīs is likewise barely distinguishable from the other members of their castes. Some of the more religious may conduct daily or weekly readings from the *Bījak* or

[26] See K. Dvivedī. *Kabīra aura Kabīra-paṃtha* p. 346.

bhajan singing, but, for most, the demands of making a living are sufficient to occupy their time. The most important breaks of religious significance in this routine are occassional visits to or from their guru, usually the mahant of a monastery located not too far from their home. Some may also make rare visits to more distant Kabīr panth centers, particularly the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh and Kabīr's samādhi at Magahar. On the full-moon day of the month Agahan, a large feast *(bhaṇḍārā)* is held at Magahar to commemorate the death of Kabīr, which is attended by one to two thousand persons.

The Kabīr monasteries are visited especially on *Sankrānti* (January 14) and *Guru-pūrṇimā* (in the month *Śrāvaṇ*), both traditional days for Hindus to visit their gurus and make offerings to them. Another important celebration for the Kabīr panth is *Jyeṣṭh-pūrṇimā*, the birth date of Kabīr.

Since almost every caste and religious group will have at last a few religious customs, festivals and pilgrimages peculiar to it, no special significance need be attached to the just-mentioned practices of the Kabīr panth. Two customs of the panth, however, do merit separate comment, since they often conflict with those of the panthīs' caste fellows and in part imply an effort to improve social status through Sanskritization and a continuing drift into the mainstream of Hinduism.

As we have noted, the compositions of Kabīr consistently declare his rejection of the external rites and practices of Hindus and Muslims alike. Four types of practices he especially repudiates are: animal sacrifice, circumcision, pilgrimage and idolatry. The first he judges inherently wrong and the other three irrelevant to salvation. With regard to pilgrimage and idolatry, the modern Kabīr panth has noticeably modified Kabīr's austere ideal. Pilgrimage holds no special place in the panth, but it is considered a meritorious act to pay a visit to certain holy sites such as the samādhis of Kabīr at Magahar and at the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh. Idolatry is tecnically rejected, but pictures of Kabīr are prominently displayed in the shrines of all the Kabīr monasteries, with the exception of those of the Pūraṇdās śākhā (Burhanpur), whose puritanism perharps owes more to the influence of Jainism than of Kabīr. The Kabīr Kīrti Mandir in Varanasi, a monastery of the Dharmadās śākhā, not only has pictures of Kabīr, but also a large statue of him which is kept in a shrine and decorated and given *prasād* in the traditional Hindu manner. Although the

monks offer the explanation that this statue is only meant to be a visible symbol of Kabīr, much the same exegesis is used as for Christian images, and the monks of the other śākhās do not approve of it. On the other hand, their own defense of the use of pictures, *ārati*, gongs and other accoutrements of Hindu worship is similar. The morning gongs, for instance, are said to be used not to wake the deity, but to inform the people of the neighborhood that religious worship is being performed.

The social significance of Kabīr's rejection of pilgrimage and idolatry and of their partial reintroduction into the Kabīr panth is somewhat ambiguous. Kabīr's own principal aim was religious reform, not the raising of social status. Both practices are approved by persons of all castes, including Brahmans. There is little doubt, however, that the belief in the efficacy of such external practices generally varies in an inverse ratio with the amount of education a person has had. Since in India, as in most societies, education has been monopolized by the upper classes, it can be assumed that Kabīr's attacks on external religion to some extent imply the emulation of enlightened upper class behavior. Likewise, the reappearance of such elements in the contemporary panth partly represents a reversion to lower caste or, at least, less-enlightened behavior. On the other hand, it is also an obvious example of Hinduization, since most Hindus do perform such practices.

In the present day, the custom which most tends to distinguish the members of the panth from their caste fellows is their obligation to abstain from all meat, fish, alcohol, and cigarettes. Of the everyday vices, only the chewing of betel nut (*pan*) is permitted to them. Kabīr's own position with respect to these vices is uncertain. Logically, his belief in reincarnation and his opposition to animal sacrifice should required a rejection of meat-eating as well. In fact, in none of the three principal collections of his compositions is there a clear expression of such a rejection. Nonetheless, modern Kabīr panthīs cite the following couplet, attributed to him, to justify the prohibition against meat, fish and alcohol:

māṃsa machariyā khāta haiṃ, surā pāna se heta
te nara narake jāeṅge, mātā pitā sameta
On account of eating meat and fish and drinking liquor,
Men will go to hell and their parents as well.

Whatever the origins of these prohibitions, they are classic examples of Sanskritization. The lower castes of Hindu society are traditionally consumers of meat and alcohol. The upper castes, on the other hand, are commonly vegetarians and teetotalers. Since most Kabīr panthīs are from lower castes, their abstention from meat and alcohol usually distinguishes them from other members of their castes. The extent to which their puritanism has led to a rise in social status is uncertain, since this subject has never been systematically investigated, at least for the panth. Nonetheless, it is clear from many similar cases that this is normally one of the principal aims of the adoption of such behavior.

Conclusion

The history of the Kabīr panth demonstrates that the pressures toward assimilation to Hindu religious and social behavior were present in the Indian cultural environment even during the time of political domination by the Mughals. Although Kabīr himself seems to have tried to separate his religious message from both Islam and Hinduism, the sect established in his name was rapidly Hinduized. A detailed explanation of why Islam had such little impact on the South Asian subcontinent lies beyond the scope of this paper. Nontheless, it is clear that one factor was the relatively small number of invaders who effected the conquest. This predisposed most of the rulers to leave the culture of their subjects alone, rather than run the risk of mass rebellion. Another important factor was the radically decentralized nature of the institutional structure of Indian society. The sultan or Mughal emperor was able to replace Hindu rajas, but he was unable to as significantly alter the local power structure which had traditionally been virtually independent even under the rajas. Likewise, since there was no centrally organized Hindu church, there was virtually no way to effectively attack Hinduism, short of massacring the entire Brahman class, a manifest impossibility. After the initial impact of the conquest had made itself felt, the Hindu and Muslim communities gradually went their own ways preserving, and often ossifying, their respective cultural identities by self-isolation. Groups like the Kabīr panth, which arose out of the encounter of Islam and Hinduism without definitively siding with either, were soon absorbed by the dominant culture which remained Hindu.

From about the middle of the eighteenth century the British, step by step, moved to assume political domination of the subcontinent.

Although the zeal with which the Muslim rulers aimed at the conversion of their Hindu subjects has often been exaggerated, it is evident that, by comparison, the British were little interested in the propagation of Christianity. The spiritual contribution of the British to Indian civilization was only tangentially related to Christianity. More significant were the ideas and ideals of European humanism, the Enlightenment, and liberal democracy. In religious affairs, the British were generally content to remain neutral. The net result was resurgence of Hindu and, more specifically, Brahman influence. It was the Brahmans and other high caste Hindus who first adapted to British rule, imbibed selected aspects of British culture, and moved into the westernized professions and lower ranks of the bureaucracy. The religious reformers of the so-called Hindu Renaissance —Rammohun Roy, Vivekanand, Dayanand, Aurobindo and Tilak— were almost all high-caste Hindus. Many had studied and been influenced by western culture, but they generally chose to found their reforms on ancient Sanskrit texts, the Vedas, Upanishads, and the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

For the higher castes, specially in urban areas, the attractions of western and traditional Sanskrit culture were sometimes in conflict. For the lower castes, however, renewed Brahman prestige imparted a renewed impulse to emulate traditional, not westernized, modes of behavior. Thus, while a number of high-caste Hindus were taking to meat-eating and alcohol, the members of the lower castes often attempted to raise their own status by abstaining from them and otherwise adopting a Sanskritized life-style. Whether or not the Kabīr panth prohibitions on meat and alcohol date from Muslim times or not, it is plausible to argue that they have been reinforced by the resurgence of Brahman influence, and that practices such as the turn to the study of Sanskrit stem directly from the same source.

In the years since independence (1947), the influence and prestige of "western" culture has continued to gain ground at the expense of traditional Hindu culture, not only among the educated elite, but among other sectors of the population as well. On a number of occasions, the administrative head of the Kabīr Caurā Maṭh expressed to me his perhaps reluctant recognition that modern learning and the English language were necessary to cope with life in contemporary India. Those who get ahead are the doctors, lawyers, engineers, politicians, bureaucrats, professors, and modern-style businessmen. Traditional Sanskrit learning is everyday held in less esteem. The religious leaders who become rich and famous are those like Maharshi

Mahesh, Saibaba, Acharya Rajneesh, and even Guru Maharajji, who are able to appeal to the new professional classes and/or foreigners. He himself often toys with the idea of making a speaking tour of the United States, but is frustrated in this desire by not having a command of English. Nonetheless, he and other educated monks have familiarized themselves with modern scholarship on Kabīr and the Kabīr panth. The works of scholars such as H.P. Dvivedī, K. Dvivedī, P. Caturvedī, R.K. Varmā, Shukdeo Singh, and even of those writing in English such as G.H. Wescott, F.E. Keay and P.D. Barthwal are well known, even if their conclusions are not always accepted. Partly through the encouragement of Dr. Shukdeo Singh, a loyal friend of the Kabīr Caurā monks, the Maṭh has recently made a sizable donation to Banaras Hindu University to support a scholarship for the study of Kabīr, and is also in the process of setting up a modern library for the same purpose in the monastery itself. One of the monks of the Maṭh is currently a B.A. student at the nearby Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College. Another from the Phatuhā śākhā is taking his M.A. in mathematics at Banaras Hindu University. Perhaps most significant in this context was the establishment of a modern "inter-college" (secondary school) at Magahar a few years ago, largely through the efforts of a progressive-minded monk of the Kabīr Caurā śākhā. The response of the panth to the changing needs of independent India may finally prove to be too late and too little, but it is beginning to be made.

Kabīr, Nānak, and the Early Sikh Panth

W.H. McLeod

Legends die hard, and the belief that Nānak was a disciple of Kabīr has been no exception. In recent years, however, this particular legend has all but disappeared and predictably, there has been a tendency to swing towards the other extreme, one which would imply total independence. A more balanced view sees them as independent of each other, but manifestly within a common tradition. Although they plainly differed in terms of locality and social status, the compatible nature of their poetic styles and religious beliefs indicates a shared inheritance of doctrinal influence. Because this shared inheritance relates directly to the presence of Muslim authority in North India, a study of Kabīr and Nānak should aptly serve the intention of this seminar.

In this paper we shall be concerned with the general question of Muslim religious influence in North India during the period extending from the late fifteenth century through to the middle of the eighteenth century. This influence we shall endeavor to identify in works associated with the name of Kabīr and those which, with substantially greater assurance, can be attached to Gurū Nānak. The examination of Sikh doctrine and religious behaviour will not terminate, however, with the first guru. Developments of transforming significance take place within the community during the period of continuing Muslim influence in the Panjab, and for this reason our analysis must be carried forward into the eighteenth century. This analysis will be specifically directed to the question of the degree to which the teachings associated with Kabīr or Nānak and with the evolving traditions of the latter's followers can be properly described as examples of syncretism. Any conclusions which emerge will primarily concern Kabīr, Nānak and the Sikhs, but it is to be hoped that they will also assist, in a more general sense, our understanding of Muslim influence in North India.

Definition of key terms

A. Conversion

We begin with a brief series of definitions, the first of which can be quickly despatched. Most would readily agree that the word *conversion* designates a process whereby allegiance is consciously transferred from one belief to another, and the formal definition of the word therefore presents no problems. The actual process, however, merits a closer scrutiny if we are to move beyond the somewhat vague generalisations which still serve as explanations for the emergence of a Muslim community in India. Although it receives little attention in this paper, it deserves a passing reference because it forms such a significant part of the background against which the present discussion must take place. With or without an understanding of the doctrines of Islam, and for whatever variety of motivation, many people in North India had affirmed that there is but one God and that Muhammad is his Prophet. Clearly one cannot even begin an examination of Kabīr without taking account of this fact. The fact itself is plain enough. Less evident is the manner in which it came about and, more significantly, the actual substance of the fact. Although an examination of Kabīr provides an excellent point of entry for such a study, the temptation is one to which we shall succumb only insofar as our scrutiny of his alleged syncretism demands.

B. Syncretism

Syncretism demands more careful attention in terms of a preliminary definition. It demands this attention because of the broad spectrum covered by varying usages of the word and, in consequence, because of the need to make it clear where one stands in the spectrum. At one end of the scale, there is to be found an understanding which, because it assumes blending and synthesizing of a deliberate and conscious nature, necessarily renders syncretism a phenomenon of great rarity. The opposing extreme would have us take account of all forms of cultural influence, however unconscious and however insignificant. This, in effect, produces a definition which embraces *all* systems of belief. The totally insulated tradition is nowhere to be found. In the sense implied by this view, all religious belief will prove, upon simple analysis, to be syncretic.

One means of ameliorating the problem is to qualify one's actual use of the term. "A syncretist" writes J.D.Y. Peel, "is a man who sees some good ... in his traditional religious practices and beliefs, *identified* as such, and attempts to synthesize them with new beliefs in a harmonious religious system."[1] This "stock notion of syncretism" he identifies as "explicit" syncretism, contrasting it with "implicit" syncretism or with the variety of personal pluralism which comprises an illogical juxtaposition of inconsistent beliefs.[2]

These simple distinctions are useful in that they provide us with three separate categories in place of one. The problem, however, remains. Explicit syncretism is easily defined and so too is personal pluralism understood as an inconsistent bracketing or conglomerate of mutually contradictory beliefs. If the range of religious teachings embraced by our title took us no further than either or both of these categories, the problem would, for present purposes, be at an end. The fact that the discussion will carry us beyond these two into the much hazier territory of implicit syncretism means that assuredly the problem is not yet at an end. Others who have found themselves confronted by this situation have avoided a firm definition in the preliminary stages of the discussion. Instead, they have sought a greater measure of clarity through the analysis of a particular example or range of implicit syncretism.[3] This is the method which we shall follow.

c. Sampradaya and *panth*

Our third definition involves two words closely allied in meaning and sometimes used interchangeably. Both designate the distinctive range of ideas which emerged from the teachings of men such as Kabīr and Nānak, and both (particularly the latter) have also served to demarcate the followings which, having gathered around such teachers, acquired a sufficient coherence to sustain a continuing existence. The former (*sampradāya*) tends to be used in a more generalised sense and to emphasise doctrinal content. The latter

[1] J.D.Y. Peel, "Syncretism and Religious Change," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, X: p. 129.

[2] Ibid., pp. 129, 134, 139.

[3] Helmer Ringgreen, "The Problems of Syncretism" in *Syncretism*, ed. S.S. Hartman (Stockholm, 1969), p. 7.

(panth) normally implies a measure of formal organisation and thereby assumes a more specific connotation.

Both terms deserve a brief examination in that, to the best of my knowledge, they bear meanings perceptibly different from any Western term. They do so for the obvious reason that they reflect a distinctively different cultural context, one which permits variable modulation as opposed to fixity and precise definition. Islam tends strongly to affirm the latter. In the Indian environment, however, it encountered a contrasting emphasis and any analysis of its impact and difference within that environment must take account of this fundamental distinction. If we are examining syncretic influence rather than positive conversion, it is to the concepts of sampradāya and panth that we must briefly direct our attention.

The first of the two terms is commonly translated by that overworked word "tradition." As I understand it, sampradāya designates an area of general doctrinal conformity, but one which possesses no clearly-defined boundaries and which permits within its recognisable territory a host of variant forms. The range of variant forms is by no means unlimited in that direct contradiction of certain essential ideas would, ipso facto, place a person outside even the shadowy borderland of the sampradāya. There remains, however, a substantial freedom within its ill-defined bounds.

Three such areas will appear in the discussion which follows. Central to our intention is the *Sant* sampradāya. Less significant for present purposes, but unavoidable because of both overlap and explicit rivalry, is the *Nāth* sampradāya. The third is not customarily described as a sampradāya, but will here be treated as one for the reason that it was so plainly envisaged in these terms by many affected by it and by many more who observed it from without. This is the *Sufi* sampradāya.

A common feature of the sampradāya is that it exalts the role of the spiritual guide (the guru or the *pīr*) and that, within the generalized sampradāya, there are to be found many such masters, each with his cluster of disciples. As these informal groups acquire coherence, they qualify for the designation, panth. This may happen many years after the death of the eponymous "founder" of the emergent group and may give expression to beliefs which differ radically from those which he actually propounded. The Kabīr-panth certainly demonstrates the latter feature and, if it does not actually exemplify the former, one can only conclude that the links between acknowledged master and self-

proclaimed disciples must be exceedingly tenuous. Indeed, they are so tenuous that the Kabīr-panth can be largely excluded from our discussion. The same cannot be said, however, of the Nānak-panth. Here the links are immediate and firm.

The panth thus serves to sharpen the clarity of definition which in the case of the sampradāya must necessarily remain blurred. In one celebrated instance this sharpening process has been particularly marked. The Nānak-panth may initially have looked very much like others of its kind, but this was to change within the period which interests us. In its later developed form, the Nānak-panth assumed a pronounced clarity of definition, one which entitles it to be regarded as a distinct religious system in its own right. The old term is still used by its adherents, but with a clearly-defined and exclusive meaning. The followers of Nānak and his successors now form what the English convention of capital letters enables us to style as the "Panth".

Kabīr

We proceed to the first of our three examples of syncretic influence and begin by noting a problem of identification. Kabīr, it has been suggested, never existed. Although I am not one of those who positively support this extreme point of view, I should certainly be prepared to affirm that the actual man has been largely screened from our view by the evolved corpus of works attributed to him. Two related processes seem plainly to have operated upon this material during the period of oral transmission which preceded their eventual emergence in three distinct traditions. The first served to amplify the range of beliefs and actual works attributed to Kabīr by attaching to his name a fund of homely proverbs and popular wisdom. Kabīr had acquired a reputation as a pungent enunciator of simple truths and, as such, served as a magnet for concepts of a like character. The second influence was the normal process of assimilation which continues to function throughout a period of oral transmission if the material thus transmitted is not protected by effective controls.[4]

There can be no doubt that processes of this kind have operated extensively upon works attributed to Kabīr. A comparison of the regional traditions represented by the *Bījak*, the *Ādi Granth*, and the

[4] The two processes sketched in this paragraph are treated more fully in a review of Charlotte Vaudeville's *Kabīr*, vol. I, (Oxford, 1974), in *South Asia* 5 (1975), pp. 101-4.

Kabīr-granthāvalī makes this abundantly clear. The result, needless to say, is a significant complicating of any analysis, including the present attempt to observe evidence of Muslim influences operating on native Indian tradition. Detailed Kabirian analysis properly involves separate examination of each of the three regional traditions as well as of the "authentic" Kabīr himself —or such of him as we are able to discern. The importance of this problem is pointed out within the terms of the discussion by a famous couplet from the *Ādi Granth* collection of Kabīr *bāṇī*:

nā ham hindū nā musalamān
alah rām ke piṇḍ parāṇ

I am neither Hindu nor Muslim.
[The One] Allah-Rām is the breath of my body.[5]

These lines spell out, with unequaled clarity, a doctrine which attaches itself firmly to the name and reputation of Kabīr. They may indeed represent a point of view which the authentic Kabīr actually affirmed, but we must nevertheless take account of the fact that, whereas the *pada* containing this couplet has distinct echoes in the Rajasthani *Kabīr-granthāvalī*, the couplet itself is to be found only in the Panjabi tradition. At all times one must retain an awareness that the Panjabi and Rajasthani traditions have elements unique to themselves, that both are, to an even greater degree, distinct from the eastern tradition of the Kabīr-panth and the *Bījak;* and that all three are distinct from the authentic Kabīr himself[6]

The authentic Kabīr provides us, however, with a relevant and well-established fact to serve as a convenient starting-point. Kabīr was himself a Muslim and, as such, delivers a personal testimony to the most obvious of all the results associated with the presence of Muslim influence in India. Kabīr-panthī traditions which represent him as the offspring of a Brahman found and brought up by Muslim parents must surely be numbered the most transparent of legends. Kabīr's name is inescapably Muslim, and the works attributed to him make sufficient reference to his Julāhā identity to set the issue beyond all reasonable doubt.

[5] *Ādi Granth*, p. 1136.

[6] For the recensions and published editions of the *Kabīr-granthāvalī*, see Charlotte Vaudeville, *Kabīr*, vol. 1, pp. 70-80.

In the context of the present discussion, however, this single fact carries little weight, in any positive sense. If we are endeavoring, with the crude instruments at our disposal, to measure Muslim influence in terms of resultant syncretism, the poet's name counts for little in comparison with the contents of his verse. Here we must stress once again the distance which separates us from the authentic Kabīr, and the consequent difficulty involved in determining the actual nature of his beliefs. The available evidence, nevertheless, seems strong enough to withstand this qualification. The actual content of his beliefs seems clearly to have had little to do with the doctrines of Islam, and influence of a direct or substantial nature emerges in a negative rather than a positive form.

Negative, as opposed to positive influence, is perhaps best illustrated by the couplet from the *Ādi Granth* quoted above. Although this particular expression is limited to one of the regional traditions, and although that tradition demonstrates a particular interest in the doctrine which it expresses, the doctrine itself finds sufficient support elsewhere to encourage the view that it should be traced to Kabīr himself. If this is correct, it serves to illustrate a negative impact. The credentials of *qāzī* and *mullāh*, the exclusive authority of the Qur'ān, or the very title of "Musalman" are scarcely likely to attract attention, if they command little weight or significance. The Kabirian denunciation of exclusive claims and the specific reference, in such contexts, to Muslim ideals or authorities plainly signifies that within the society of Kabīr's own time and that of the period of subsequent oral transmission these concepts and authorities really mattered. This, of course, merely states the obvious. The point of stating it is to make clear the essentially negative quality of this particular influence.

When we move from negative influences to the search for those of a more positive character, we encounter little that is substantial. It is evident that Kabīr himself was largely ignorant of the doctrines of Islam, other than the simple variety which amounted to common knowledge. If that is incorrect, we must necessarily affirm either that he chose to omit reference to them in his utterances or, alternatively, that authentic utterances which incorporated evidences of this understanding were subsequently suppressed in all the regional traditions. The instrinsic improbability of these two latter theories leaves us free to agree with the view that Kabīr knew little of Islam beyond such patently obvious facts as their custom of attending

mosques, calling upon God in a particular manner, and proceeding as opportunity afforded upon the *haj*.

An obvious rejoinder to this accusation of ignorance is that Kabīr was, after all, a Julāhā and that humble weavers are seldom enrolled in the ranks of the theologically learned. This would suggest that humble weavers are incapable of theological understanding of any style or coloring and that Kabīr, whatever his skill as a homely maxim-maker, was ignorant per se. The response to any such rejoinder would be that, having expressed all the usual qualifications concerning access to the authentic Kabīr, we are still able to affirm that in one significant area of doctrine and religious practice he was far removed from ignorance. Kabīr's apparent innocence of Muslim theology must be contrasted with an extensive knowledge of a radically different religious tradition.

Although it is now forty years since P.D. Barthwal demonstrated the close links connecting the Nāth and Sant sampradāyas, it is only now that most of us in the West are being forced to acknowledge this fact by the works of Dr. Charlotte Vaudeville. Of the connection there can be no doubt, and in no instance is it revealed with greater clarity than in the works attributed to Kabīr. Once again we can argue that agreement on the part of all three regional traditions entitles us to attach a particular characteristic to the authentic Kabīr. The characteristic in this particular case is an extensive understanding of Nāth theory and terminology. Kabīr cannot be called a Nāth, but the Nāth imprint upon his understanding seems proven beyond all doubt.[7]

Where does this leave us as far as the authentic Kabīr is concerned? It indicates that he embodied Muslim influence, as the offspring of Julāhā converts, but that in doctrinal terms the influence was strictly subordinate to others more powerful and that the only overt acknowledgement of its importance takes the form of an explicit rejection. There are, it is true, present in the works attributed to Kabīr those features of medieval devotional doctrine which have traditionally been ascribed to Muslim influence. These include the unity of God, affirmations of religious equality, and a stress upon the role of the religious preceptor. In all three instances one could, with equal credibility, declare the result to be a debt to Nāth ideals, and to these three one could add other fundamental beliefs or practices such as their use of the vernacular for religious purposes.

[7] Ibid., chap. 5.

None of this can be held either to demolish claims to significant Muslim influence upon Kabīr or to erect Nāth influence as a proven substitute. It does, however, suggest a direction for our enquiry. Given the substantial Nāth content of his thinking, as opposed to the elementary nature of his Muslim understanding, one is at least inclined to question claims of substantial Muslim influence apart from the mere fact of conversion. The regional traditions tend, if anything, to push Muslim influence still further into the background by the greater stress which they lay upon features of traditional Vaiṣṇava devotion.

If we are to judge from the authentic Kabīr or the Kabirian corpus we must, I submit, be impressed by the strength of both Nāth and Vaiṣṇava concepts and the comparative weakness of those which it seems reasonable to ascribe to Muslim influence. Because of the Nāth and Vaiṣṇava influences, althoug both native traditions are themselves so far apart, one is certainly entitled to speak of a Kabirian synthesis or (in the sense already indicated) an example of implicit syncretism, and to accomodate this within the winder range of Sant belief. Nāth and Vaiṣṇava elements seem clear. Muslim influence and elements seem much less conspicuous.

Gurū Nānak

Nānak has, it seems, been a great favorite with many teachers of religious studies who, confronted by the apparent need to provide a clear-cut case of deliberate syncretism, fastened upon a welcome pronouncement in early editions of J.B. Noss's *Man's Religions* with relief. The chapter on Sikhism, in this much-used textbook, was subtitled "A Study in Syncretism" and the religion of Nānak described there in as "an outstanding example of conscious syncretism."[8]

For such teachers, Noss' subsequent amending of this useful sentence must have been a disappointment only partially relieved by more recent work on West African cults.[9] Indeed, there is reason to suspect that some of them have failed to notice the change. Judging by

[8] J.B. Ross, *Man's Religions*, (New York, 1956), p. 275. See also Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford, 1964), p. 152.

[9] In recent editions "conscious" has been changed to "working": *Man's Religions* (New York, 1974), p. 226.

comments which followed the publication of *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, the notion that Nānak's teachings represent a synthesis incorporating substantial and direct borrowings from Islam is one that will not be easily dispelled. Although such words as "deliberate" and "conscious" may be treated with rather more caution than previously, the essentially syncretic nature of Nānak's thinking seems still to be a part of accepted wisdom. The components are generally declared to comprise a blending of elements drawn from an entity known as "Hinduism" and ideals derived from Sufi doctrine and practice.[10]

The arguments which have been offered (or implied) in support of the Hindu/Muslim or Hindu/Sufi claim can be grouped in three categories. The first variety of argument apparently derives from the notion that Gurū Nānak himself made pronouncements or performed symbolic actions which indicated a conscious attempt to draw Hindu and Muslim together. This, one suspects, is the origin of the belief that Nānak manifests syncretism of an explicit rather than a merely implicit variety. One such statement is the celebrated formula said to have been uttered by the guru following his emergence from the experience of enlightenment in the waters of the Veīn River: *nā ko hindū hai nā ko musalamān*, "There is neither Hindu nor Muslim."[11] Another is his alleged custom of dressing in a combination of Hindu and Muslim sartorial styles.[12]

The second range of arguments might be designated the "must have been" or "intrinsic likelihood" variety of argument. This begins from the undoubted presence in fifteenth-century Panjab of a host of Muslims (both immigrant and convert) and of the distinguished presence amongst them of representatives of Sufi *silsilahs*. Prominent amongst these were the descendants of the renowned Bahā al-Dīn Zakarīyā of Multān and Farīd al-Dīn Gasj-i-Shakar of Pāk Paṭṭan. Plainly, there was a substantial Muslim following in the Panjab of this period, much of it attached to the prestige and spiritual influence of the Sufi *khānqāhs*.

Numbers and the influence of the order evident in the Panjab of this period must assuredly have had a substantial impact upon the

[10] For examples, see J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History* (Chandigarh, 1969), pp. 198-99; W.H. McLeod, "The Influence of Islām upon the thought of Gurū Nānak," *History of Religions* 7.4 (May, 1968), p. 302.

[11] Vīr Singh, ed., *Purātan Janam-sākhī* (Amritsar, 1959), p. 16.

[12] Ibid., p. 25.

culture of the Panjab in general. This was the culture inherited by Gurū Nānak, the very air that he breathed. If it was indeed impregnated with Muslim ideals, whether in a general sense or of a more specifically Sufi nature, it must inevitably have affected his outlook and therefore his teachings. Two assumptions are implicit in this argument. The first is that the entire culture of the Panjab was in fact shot through with Muslim influence. The second is that the presence of such cultural influence must inescapably and significantly affect all who live within the society which gives it expression.

The third category of argument concerns features of Nānak's recorded works which offer evident parallels to Muslim doctrine or custom, the emphasis once again being laid on Sufi beliefs and example. These I have listened elsewhere,[13] and other writers have likewise compiled their own catalogues.[14] In them we feature such elements as a doctrine of God at once transcendent, formless, and immanent; and Nānak's concept of *nām simaran* (to which are compared the Sufi *dhikr* and *murāqabat*). With these lists of apparent similarities, we should also associate Nānak's obvious acquaintance with Sufi terminology and his occasional use of it.

Of these three catagories, the first can be summarily dismissed. Neither the quoted utterance nor the symbolic dress (nor any other such examples) can be attached to the historical Nānak. They are to be found not in his own works but in the *janam-sākhīs*, the hagiographic narratives which emerge after his death and which, having passed through several expanding phases, provide us with practically all that passes as the "biography" of Nānak. Enough has already been said on the janam-sākhīs as mediators of the historical Nānak. Here we shall merely note that their manifest lack of reliability in this particular area renders their testimony to Nānak's peacemaking symbolism highly suspect. Nānak must be judged on the basis of his own words and nothing in his actual *bānī* supports the notion of explicit syncretism or of bringing Hindu and Muslim together on the basis of a mutual acceptance of their distinctive doctrines.

As revealed by his own works, Nānak's attitude amounts to neither

[13] *History of Religions* 7, 4 (May, 1968), pp. 310-11.

[14] M. Mujeeb, *Islamic Influence on Indian Society* (Meerut, 1972), p. 175.

acceptance nor to necessary rejection. The key to understanding his teachings at this particular point is his clear distinguishing of the "true Hindu" and the "true Muslim" from all the rest. In Nānak's terms both the former are accepted, whereas the remainder, whether Hindu or Muslim, are reprobated if they exercise conventional religious authority and pitied if they respond to its dictates. The emphasis for Nānak must be laid firmly and exclusively upon interior devotion as opposed to external observance. The person who accepts the interior way will achieve salvation, be he Hindu, Muslim or anything else. All others, again without reference to their formal allegiance, will suffer the consequences of the karma earned by their hypocrisy or by their fatal application of erroneous convictions. The difference between Hindu and Muslim is irrelevant. Truth lies beyond both and is to be appropriated by a transcending of both.[15]

The second category (the "intrinsic likelihood" range of argument) poses questions of a rather more complex nature and assuredly cannot be dismissed with the same ease and expedition. On theoretical grounds, the claim that sensitive members of any given society are bound to be affected by its mores is unexceptional to the point of being axiomatic. Given the strength of Muslim numbers and evident influence one would also expect that by the late fifteenth century these mores would in some measure reflect that influence. Let it therefore be acknowledged that, in theretical terms, there is considerable force in the "intrinsic likelihood" argument.

The problem with this argument, when applied to the works of Nānak, is not its theoretical basis, but its data content. In order to establish a syncretic case on Hindu/Muslim lines, one must identify within the works of Nānak those features which manifiest unmistakeable Muslim origin or influence. We are led directly into the third range of arguments, those which claim to answer the need by providing the actual evidence.

This particular issue has been treated at some length in an earlier

[15] This aspect of Nanāk's doctrine is discussed in W.H. McLeod, "Religious Tolerance in Sikh Scriptural Writings," in *Guru Tegh Bahadur* ed. G.S. Talib (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1976), forthcoming.

article and summarily in *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*.[16] It therefore seems reasonable to limit the present discussion to an acknowledgement of review comments on the latter, which struck home, and a brief restatement of those elements in the earlier treatment, which seem to me to have survived the attack. At one particular point I am bound to acknowledge the need for explicit modification. In my earlier treatment I drew a distinction between "classical" Sufism and a popular "debased" form, suggesting that insofar as a limited influence operated on Nānak's thinking it derived from the latter. Without wholly renouncing the distinction, I acknowledge that it was grossly overdrawn.[17]

This admission, however, concerns the specific origin of any such influence, not the weight and impact which it bore upon the thought of Nānak. In this latter area (which is what really concerns this discussion), I am bound to own that my interpretation has been little modified. The attention which has been drawn to the parallels subsisting between Sufi doctrine and the works of Nānak seem to me to leave the principal answer largely unaffected. This I expressed in the following terms:

> The conclusion to which our examination points is that Sūfī influence evidently operated upon the thought of Gurū Nānak but that in no case can we accord this influence a fundamental significance. Sūfī and Qur'ānic imageries have certainly made their impress, and there must have been encouragement to tendencies which accorded with Sūfī teaching; but no fundamental components can be traced with assurance to an Islamic source. Gurū Nānak's principal inheritance from the religious background of his period was unquestionably that of the Sant tradition, and evidence of other independent influences is relatively slight. We must indeed acknowledge that the antecedents of Sant belief are by no means wholly clear and that within the area of obscurity there may be important features which derived primarily from Sūfī sources. The complexity of the subject leaves appreciable room for doubt, and we are accordingly bound to own that at least some of our conclusions must be regarded as tentative, not as definitively established. It appears, however, that Sant belief owes none of its basic constituents to the Sūfīs. For Sant belief, the major source is to be found in the bhakti movement, with Nāth theory entering as a significant secondary source.[18]

[16] McLeod, "Influence of Islam", pp. 302-16.

[17] I owe this and other perceptive comments to Mr. Simon Digby.

[18] McLeod, "Influence of Islam", pp. 315-16.

I see no reason to modify this conclusion in any significant degree, and I am therefore constrained to look once again at the "instrinsic likelihood" theory. If, as our analysis of Nānak's teaching seems to suggest, distinctly Muslim influences project less evidence than one might have anticipated, it presumably follows that we have been tending to overemphasise the impact of those influences. Because there seems to be little doubt concerning Muslim numerical strength or the strength of the cultural influence borne by many of its representatives, one is driven by default to seek explanations in the resilience of those cultural features which we can identify as pre-Muslim or patently non-Muslim.

The example of Kabīr and his diverse followers has already pointed in this direction and Nānak's legacy of poetic composition seems plainly to enhance its claims. Neither Kabīr (as far as we can determine his authentic beliefs) nor Nānak manifest in their works influences which are at once unmistakeably Muslim in origin and fundamental to the structure of their thought. The Sant sampradāya, within which each occupies a distinguished place, likewise presents a range of devotional belief and practice which derives its principal ideals from native Indian sources and which offers only doubtful or peripheral evidence of significant Muslim influence.

In these circumstances it appears safe to dismiss the possibility of conscious, deliberate syncretism. Nānak's own words, like those attributed to Kabīr in all regional traditions, seem plainly to exclude this interpretation. Does this still leave open the possibility of implicit syncretism? If there is meaning in the term "implicit syncretism", it can certainly be applied in both instances, provided that the dominant sources utilised in the process are located within native Indian traditions. The pattern of belief which they represent does not appear to be one which draws substantially from distinctively Muslim sources.

The early Sikh panth

It will be observed that in passing judgement on the Sant synthesis we stopped short with the person of Nānak. We can, however, proceed somewhat further with the judgement, gathering into the same fold those of his successors whose works appear in the *Ādi Granth*. The *Ādi Granth*, compiled in 1603-04, carries us through to the fifth of the Sikh gurus, and in the process sustains the teachings already spelt out by the first guru. Of the remaining gurus only the tenth, Gurū

Gobind Singh, has left evidence of extensive personal compositions and, insofar as we are able to identify these, they too imply confirmation of our judgement. Significant evidence of direct and positive Muslim influence will be difficult to find in the works which can, with reasonable assurance, be attributed to Gurū Gobind Singh and, in terms of explicit attitudes, the message is the same. It is, indeed, in one such work that we find the most famous of all Sikh declarations concerning the essential irrelevance of the differences separating Hindus and Muslims, and of the need to transcend both in order to attain truth.[19]

The compositions which may reasonably be attributed to Gurū Gobind Singh occur in the later collection of semi canonical writings known as the *Dasam Granth*, and if we were to push our analysis in this particular direction we should soon find ourselves moving even further from evidences of Muslim influence than anything we have covered so far. The substantial bulk of the *Dasam Granth* comprises materials drawn directly from the *Purāṇas*. The general tenor of the *Dasam Granth* is distinctly Purāṇic, with powerful Śakti overtones.[20] Once again we need have little difficulty in detecting syncretic impulses at work, but not impulses which betray any willingness to incorporate Muslim ideas.

If, however, we turn away from the direction indicated by the *Dasam Granth* and look instead at the other major development in the Sikh literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we shall observe a rather different emphasis, one which would appear to carry us closer to positive Muslim influence than anything we have noted hitherto. The early Sikh Panth evidently responded to Muslim influence in both positive and negative terms. It is in this literary development that we observe the signs of positive response, though whether or not it produces results which may properly be labeled syncretic is a question which will bring us back to our problem of definition.

The literary development which thus demands our brief attention is that of the janam-sākhīs, to which passing reference was made when questioning the reliability of statements and symbolic actions

[19] *Akāl Ustat* 86, *Dasam Granth*, p. 19.

[20] Niharranjan Ray, *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society* (Patiala, 1970), pp. 27-28; W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 13-14, 79-81.

attributed to Nānak. The reliability issue is one which requires two answers. If we are concerned with the historical Nānak, then the testimony of the janam-sākhīs must be regarded with the greatest of caution. The janam-sākhīs are strictly hagiographic and must therefore be used with care in any approach to the authentic Nānak. If, however, they are used as a means of access to the understanding of the post-Nānak Panth then, needless to say, one can attach to them a much greater degree of trust. For the image of Nānak, as seen through Sikh eyes during the seventeenth century and later, they are sources of unequalled value.[21]

At first sight, the early janam-sākhīs may seem to confirm a trend away from Muslim influence. This conclusion could conceivably be suggested by the obvious emphasis which they lay upon confrontations between Bābā Nānak, on the one hand, and sundry Sufi pīrs, on the other. The recurrent confrontations of the janam-sākhīs serve to identify all whom the compilers viewed as rivals, the method being to contrive a pattern of discourse leading to inevitable triumph by Nānak. Because Sufi pirs figure prominently in such discourses, they must necessarily be understood as rivals in the eyes of the compilers and presumably of the Panth in more general terms. The inclusion of triumphs wrought in Mecca, Medina, and Baghdad strengthen this impression.

There are, however, other features of the janam-sākhī presentation which should substantially qualify this impression. The first is the even greater emphasis which is laid upon confrontations with representatives of the Nāth sampradāya in anecdotes which suggest considerably less janam-sākhī sympathy for Nāths than for Sufis. Hostility towards the former has not prevented the Panth from retaining within its range of beliefs those which can be traced to Nāth origins.

The answer to this claim could, of course, be that the compilers were quite unaware of any debt which the Panth, with its Sant inheritance, might owe to the Nāths; and also that a parallel in terms of janam-sākhī roles need imply nothing in terms of positive influence. A second feature is, however, more difficult to dismiss. If one moves from the janam-sākhīs to the Sufi *tazkiras*, one is at once struck by the remarkable identity of the anecdotal approach in each case. The correspondence extends, moreover, well beyond mere narrative forms

[21] Ibid., chap. 2.

into actual content. Several anecdotes have obviously been borrowed in toto, and because the Sufi versions are chronologically earlier, there is never any doubt who is borrowing from whom.

The influence of Sufi models can thus be seen in a major literary form and in some of the stories which it relates. This alone does not amount to syncretism, but if the janam-sākhī presentation is analysed with greater care, it will, I suggest, become evident that the impress of the model has affected the image of Bābā Nānak projected therein. The trend is towards the image of a Sufi *pīr*.[22] If this hypothesis is sustained, it must convincingly demonstrate direct influence from a recognisably Muslim source; and if the theory of implicit syncretism is viable, it must surely accommodate influence of this kind.

Any trend thus established within the Panth was, however, soon deflected. In the confused circumstances of the eighteenth century the Panth became involved in struggles which assumed an increasingly anti-Muslim coloring. This greatly strengthened other tendencies already powerfully present within it and produced, in terms of doctrine and religious behavior, an outcome which in part, at least, represents a negative response to Muslim influence. The *Khālsā* conventions which emerge as a militant tradition and which are embodied in the evolving *rahit* (or Khālsā "code of discipline") incorporate elements which seem plainly to express a vigorous and self-conscious reaction against Muslim ideals.[23] Once again, we are confronted by an instance of development in response to external influence, a development of great interest and importance. It is, however, one which draws its principal components from areas of Panjab society distinct from those which we can identify as Muslim. The Muslim contribution, important though it be, has been communicated in terms which provide an effective counter-reaction.

Conclusion

There are, I suggest, two varieties of conclusion which emerge from this approach to Kābir, Nānak, and the early Sikh Panth. The first

[22] Simon Digby offers an interesting example. The janam-sākhī juxtaposing of graciousness and apparent heartlessness is, he convincingly suggests, a reflection of the Sufi pairing of *jalāl* and *jamāl* in its hagiographic image of the pīr: *Indian Social and Economic History Review* 7, 2 (June, 1970), pp. 308-9.

[23] McLeod, *The Evolution*, pp. 50-52.

concerns the theoretical form within which the argument has been cast, and specifically the term *syncretism*. Having tentatively acknowledged a distinction between "explicit" and "implicit" syncretism we have argued that the former is not to be found within the area which concerns us, and we have strongly hinted that the latter usage provides us with terminology of highly questionable value. It is, in my opinion, an expression which should be discarded in favor of the terms, *influence, assimilation* and *synthesis*. These words are less confusing. They are more clearly distinct from notions of deliberate intention and they lack the pejorative connotation which, for some at least, is attached to *syncretism*.

I therefore suggest that we dismiss the term *syncretism* from Indo-Muslim studies. The distinction between "explicit" and "implicit" syncretism seems to me to be valueless, in that the latter category is essentially without meaning. If *syncretism* is to be retained unqualified as a means of designating a conscious and deliberate process, it will describe a phenomenon of great rarity and one which we are unlikely to encounter in the territory which interests us.

The second conclusion is at once more practical and more hesitant. It has been suggested in this paper that Muslim influence of a clear and fundamental kind is difficult to detect in the ideals of the Sant sampradāya. Although its two most distinguished representatives have been commonly cited as prime examples of the impact of Muslim cultural influence (particularly in its Sufi expression), a careful analysis of their works seems likely to reveal that this is, at best, a questionable assumption. It would appear to be an assumption which can still retain claims to possibility, but which should no longer be used with the carefree ease and assurance too often evident in the past. When we move forward into the history of the post-Nānak Panth, we encounter conflicting tendencies, one of which (the development of the janam-sākhīs) suggests a certain degree of effective Sufi influence. It is, however, a tendency which is largely overwhelmed by another (the ascendancy of Khālsā ideals). This latter manifests clear signs of Muslim influence, but in terms which signify an effective counter-response.

If, from the last of these developments, we deduce the religious consequences of militant but increasingly ineffective Muslim political power, we shall scarcely be offering anything original or surprising. The paucity of earlier evidence could, however, bear an import of greater significance. One is sometimes inclined to suspect that such

dramatic phenomena as the glories of Mughal architecture and the twentieth-century emergence of Pakistan may cause us to exaggerate the impact of earlier Muslim influence. This, in turn, may persuade us to view developments within the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with a bias which, if it applies at all, should be properly confined to the century which follows. One could never claim that an analysis of the Sant sampradāya will alone confirm this suspicion beyond all shadow of doubt. It may, however, proffer a warning. The fact of Muslim influence can never be in dispute. What *can* be disputed is the extent of that influence and the right to make easy generalisations without careful scrutiny of their justification.

The Sikh Panth: 1500-1850

J.S. Grewal

This historical situation in which the Sikh movement originated was marked by social tensions caused by politico-cultural change due to Turko-Afghan domination which involved displacement at the higher echelons of power and a cultural penetration of varying depth and degree. The founder of the Sikh movement propounded a new social order through moral regeneration, transcending all differences of caste, creed and sex, with a new ideal of equality in forming new institutions. Conceived primarily in religious terms, the ideal was translated into social terms, but only partially. Equality remained the ideal norm of the Sikh social order, but social reality was marked ultimately by a differentiation approximating to the environment in which the movement had initially been born. Within the course of three centuries, the original impulse was exhausted, leaving behind a mixed heritage of achievement, ideals and institutions.

Gurū Nānak (1469-1539), the founder of the Sikh movement, witnessed a dynastic change in his lifetime, but his movement was not initiated in response to any dramatic events or rapid change. A long spell of peace marked the politics of the Punjab under the Afghans, during the first fifty years of his life. Reflection on the socio-cultural environment in this period of peace determined the nature and the quality of his response.

Long before the Lodī Afghans came to power in the Punjab, indigenous ruling classes had either been wiped out or assimilated into the power structure evolved by the Turkish conquerors. The removal of native rulers adversely affected the prestige and position of the priestly *brahman*, who had enjoyed the highest status in the Hindu social order. He sought recompense in strengthening the bonds and taboos of the caste system.

When the Lodīs came to rule in place of the Turks, the substance of politico-administrative power passed into the hands of the Afghans.

Like the Turks, they shared this power at subordinate levels with the *chaudharīs* of groups of villages, the majority of whom were Hindu. Persian-speaking *khatrīs*, whose position in theory was next to that of the brahmans in the caste system, found employment in offices and in revenue administration. They came to identify themselves with their Afghan superiors. Their performance presented a clear contradiction of the duties assigned to them in the *varana* order, namely to rule and give protection. Gurū Nānak condemned them, as well as the Afghan administrators, for their rapacity and high-handedness in dealing with the subject peoples.

In the eyes of Gurū Nānak, the rulers of the day were morally unjust: they imposed a pilgrimage tax on their Hindu subjects, and their patronage was reserved almost exclusively for individuals and institutions belonging to their own religion. We know in retrospect, however, that the Afghan rulers did not initiate this policy. They only upheld an established tradition. Gurū Nānak's comment is thus a comment on one of the lasting features of Turko-Afghan polity. He did not denounce the Lodis because they were Muslim. He did not denounce the structure of power or the monarchical form of government. In fact, he did not seek, or offer, any solution to the problems of his age on the political plane.

Nevertheless, Gurū Nānak's moral comment was closely linked with his concern for the unprivileged. In his view, the leaders of opinion among Muslims, the *'ulamā'* and the *Mashāikh*, who themselves depended upon the patronage of an unjust and oppressive government, had become a vested interest. The highest castes among the Hindus were no longer in a position to perform the duties expected of them. Gurū Nānak identified himself with the unprivileged. In reaction to the social inequalities of his times, he advocated spiritual equality. For with regard to salvation, the *shūdra* was on a par with the brahman, and woman with man. The universality of Gurū Nānak's message was the obverse of his idea of equality. He expected a new social order to develop through moral regeneration.

Gurū Nānak gave a tangible shape to his conception of a new order based on equality. All his followers worshipped together in congregations *(sangat)* and maintained a common kitchen *(langar)* for communal eating on the basis of their voluntary contributions in cash, kind, or service. All distinctions of caste and taboos of ritual purity were set aside. The followers of Gurū Nānak thus constituted the nucleus of a new socio-religious order, the Sikh Panth.

The Sikh Panth grew in numbers under Gurū Nānak's successors, who undertook intensive missionary work in the countryside and founded new towns attracting traders and craftsmen. By the early seventeenth century, according to the impression carried by the much-travelled author of the *Dabistān-i-Mazāhib*, Nānak-Panthīs were living in all the towns and cities of the Mughal Empire. They lived in the countryside too, and agriculture was one of their major occupations. The early seventeenth century Sikh Panth consisted largely of trading communities, particularly the khatrīs of the Punjab towns, and agricultural communities, especially the *jāts* of the Punjab villages, in addition to urban and rural artisans and craftsmen.

It was not possible for the Gurū to look after every local congregation (sangat) personally. His representatives, known as *masands*, became an essential link betwen the local sangats and the Guru. Among other things, they collected voluntary offerings from the sangats for the Guru, which ensured his financial independence. Other bonds of cohesion were successfully forged: adoption of certain places as centres of Sikh pilgrimage, distinctive rituals, ceremonies and festivals, and collections of sacred writings, for example. Futhermore, the idea of the unity of guruship, which distinguishes the Sikh movement from all other religious movements in India, bestowed the authority of the founder on the successors. This extension of Gurū Nānak's authority to his successors gave a degree of cohesion to the Sikh Panth unknown in any other religious group in medieval India. Around 1600, the Sikhs were becoming acutely conscious of their distinctive socio-religious entity and their historical role.

At this stage precisely, the Mughal government chose to interfere with the autonomy of the Sikh Panth by imposing punishments on Gurū Arjan which caused his death. His son and successor, Gurū Hargobind (1606-44), decided to defend himself with physical force and actually fought a few battles against the Mughal *faujdārs* during the reign of Shāh Jahān. His followers were obliged to choose between loyalty to the Gurū and allegiance to the state. Tension within the Sikh Panth was accentuated by splintering marked not by doctrinal differences so much as by the differences of attitudes towards the state. The independent stance of Gurū Tegh Bahadur resulted in his martyrdom by orders of Aurangzeb in 1675. The dual problem of Gurū Gobind Singh, the son and successor of Gurū Tegh Bahadur, was to unify the Panth and enable it to withstand external interference. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, he founded the famous

Order of the Khālsā. Only those who gave their allegiance to Gurū Gobind Singh were to be regarded as Khālsā. All rival claimants to guruship and their followers were removed from the folds of the Khālsā Panth. The Khālsā of Gurū Gobind Singh were to wear arms in order to defend themselves, individually and collectively.

One very important result of these developments was a tremendous increase in the proportion of *jāts* in the Sikh Panth. Gurū Nānak's ideal of equality had attracted them to his faith from the very beginning. Conflicts with the state intimidated the easily accesible town-dweller, but not the jāt in his rural fastness. The measures of Gurū Gobind Singh, in conjunction with his impassioned reiteration of equality, practically ensured jāt preponderance in the Khālsā Panth. His armed conflict with those in power in the early years of the eighteen century further tilted the numerical balance in favor of the countryside. The overwhelming majority of the jāts in the Khālsā Panth gave it the semblance of an egalitarian order. Inclusion of the low castes strengthened its egalitarian character.

For the Khālsā Panth, the authority and the guidance of a Gurū, in person, ended with the death of Gurū Gobind Singh in 1708, giving rise to the idea of *Gurū Panth*. The end of personal guruships was made possible by a long process through which guruship was impersonalized. Before his death Gurū Nānak had installed one of his Sikhs in his own place and offered him the homage due to the Gurū's office. The position of the individual Sikh and the Gurū thus became theoretically interchangeable. A greater degree of sanctity came to be attached to the Sikh congregation (sangat) among whom the Gurū was deemed to be present. Gurū Gobind Singh actually delegated some of his authority to Khālsā sangats. A contemporary writer equated the sangat with the Gurū. Thus, when Gurū Gobind Singh did not nominate a successor, the Khālsā were prepared to think of guruship as vested in the entire body of his followers.

Within a decade of Gurū Gobind Singh's death, his followers established their own sovereign rule, which proved to be transitory. But fifty years later; they re established their sovereignty. The interlude had been maked by virulent persecution. The jāts and low caste Khālsā of the countryside who survived accounted for nearly the whole Khālsā Panth. During this period of life -and-death struggle, the equal right of every member to fight and to rule was conceded by all. It was outwardly reconciled to the idea of Gurū Panth through the adoption

of collective resolutions *(gurmatas)*. These resolutions carried the Khālsā to the point of occupying territories, leaving the question of equality betwen the founders of principalities and their followers wide open. The idea of Gurū Panth began to be relegated to the background as soon as Sikh rule was established.

The idea of Gurū Panth did not give rise to a theory that the political power of the Sikh ruler was to be used to bring about social change or any change in the distribution of wealth. The Sikh social order of the times had royalty at the top, followed by *sardārs*, and rich *jāgīrdārs* with their politico-administrative privileges. Even the existence of slavery is visualized by an eighteenth-century Sikh writer propounding an ideal Sikh state. Under Sikh rule, thus, there was little structural change in the society, including the Sikh Panth. At the end of nearly three and a half centuries of Sikh movements, including about ninety years of Sikh rule, we find no change in the socio-economic structure.

Amidst socio-economic differentiations of the Sikh Panth, the idea of *Gurū Granth* provided a sense of unity and equality. That idea may be traced ultimately to the theology of Gurū Nānak. He had equated the Gurū with the "Word" *(sabad)*, as the medium of communication between man and God. His followers, regarding his compositions *(bānī)* as divinely inspired for the redemption of mankind, equated the bānī with the Word and, therefore, the bānī with the Gurū. Consequently, the *Granth Sahib*, collected and compiled by Gurū Arjan in 1604, could become an alternative to personal guruship. At the time of his death, Gurū Gobind Singh could logically refer his Khālsā to the Granth for inspiration in the future. Collective resolutions *(gurmatas)*, adopted by the Khālsā in the presence of the *Granth Sahid*, became morally binding. The ideas of *Gurū Granth* came into greater prominence when every Sikh ruler established his principality along monarchical lines, with all its implications for the structure of power. But he liked to believe that he was as much a member of the Sikh Panth as an ordinary Sikh. He could sit with his own domestic servant as an equal in the presence of the Gurū Granth, without any hesitation or burden on his conscience. But socio-economic differences appeared to be ordained by God, and mundane success a sign of His Grace.

Selected Bibliography

Banerjee, Indubhusan. *Evolution of the Khalsa*. 2 vols. Calcuta, 1936 and 1946.

Grewal, J.S. *From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*. Amritsar: Guru Nanak University, 1972.

_____. *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*. Oxford University Press, 1968.

McLeod, W.H. *The Evolution of the Sikh Community: Five Essays*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975.

_____. *Gurū Nānak in History*. Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1969.

Ray, Niharranjan. *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society*. Patiala: Punjabi University, 1970.